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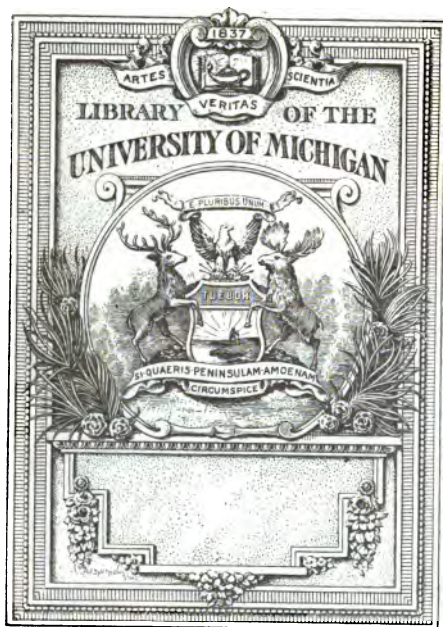
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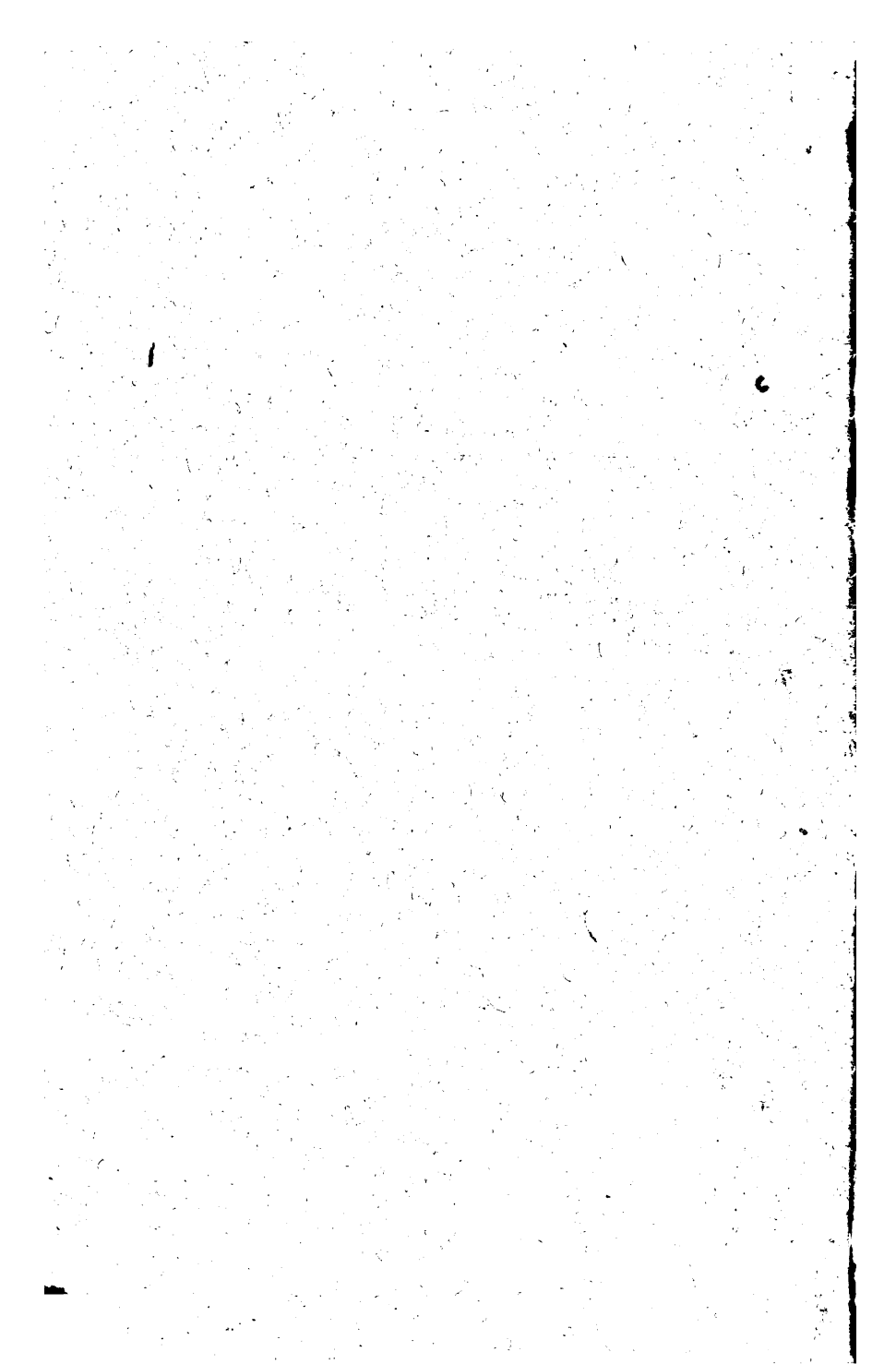
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P O E M S

BY

WILLIAM COWPER,

Of the INNER TEMPLE, Esq.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

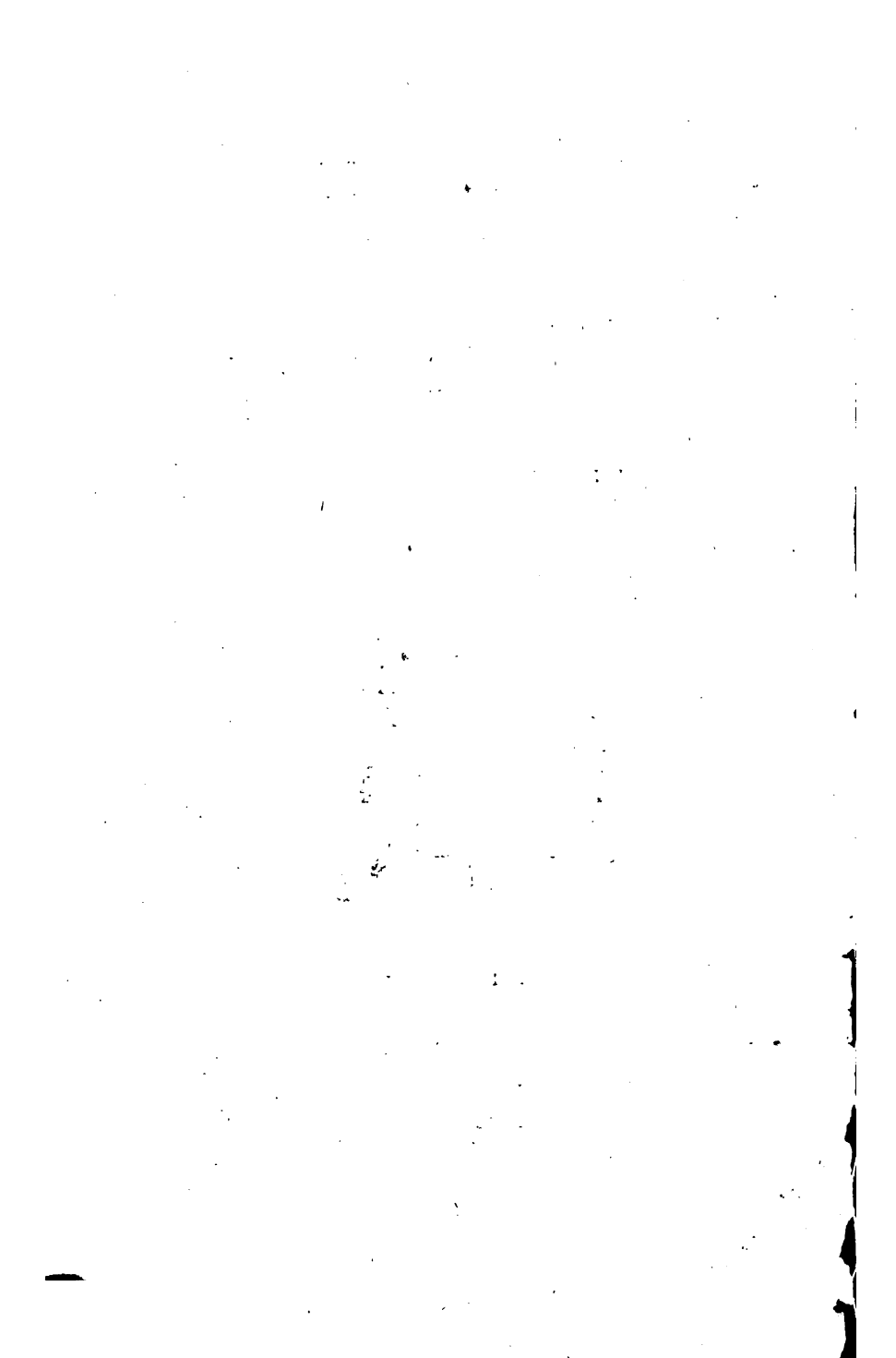


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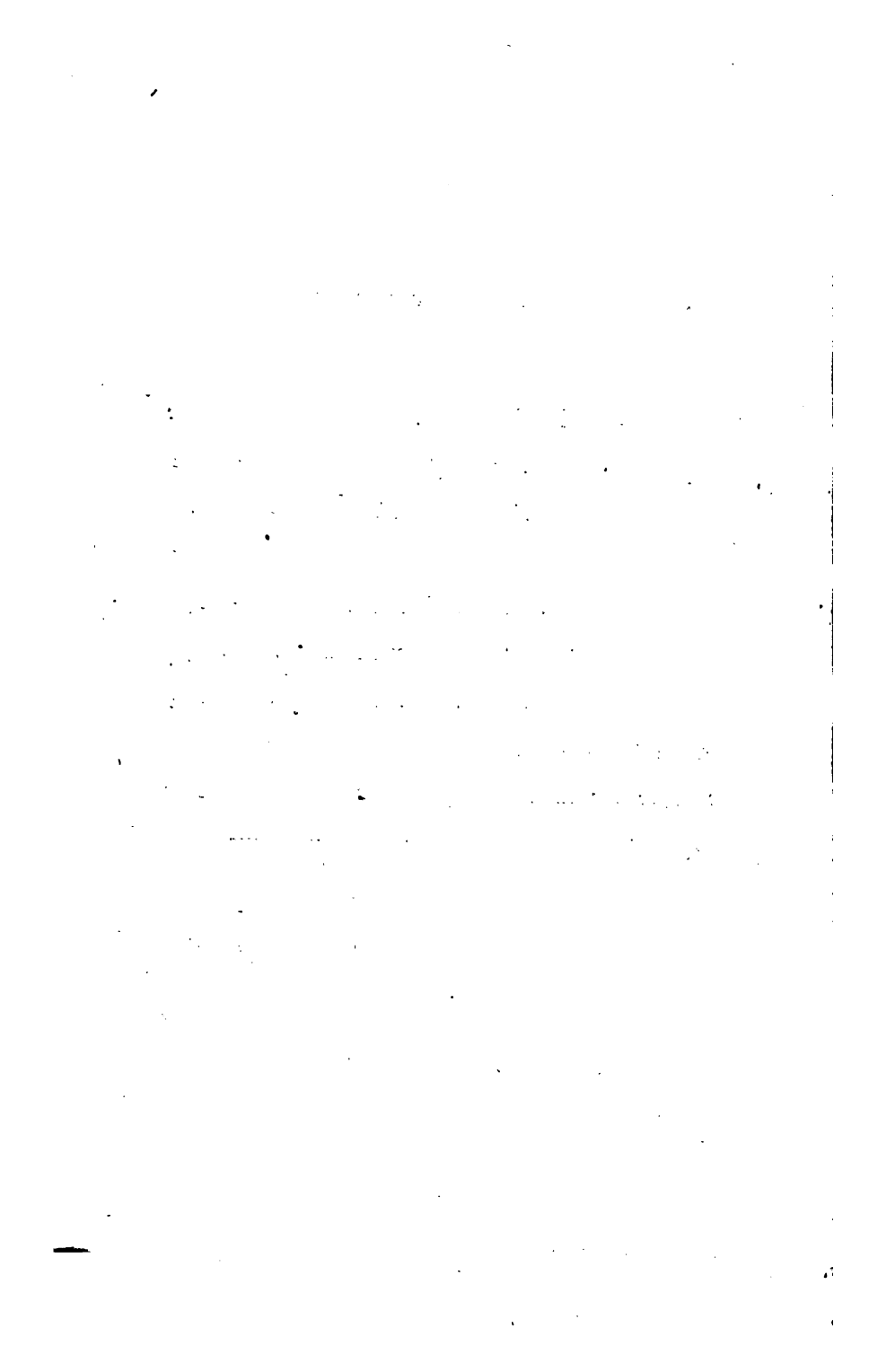
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CONTENTS OF VOL. II.

<i>THE TASK</i> , in Six Books.	Page
↓ Book I. <i>The Sofa</i> — —	1
II. <i>The Time-Piece</i> — —	43
↓ III. <i>The Garden</i> — —	89
↓ IV. <i>The Winter Evening</i> —	135
↓ V. <i>The Winter Morning Walk</i>	179
VI. <i>The Winter Walk at Noon</i>	229
<i>An Epistle to Joseph Hill, Esq;</i> — — —	285
<i>Tirocinium: Or, A Review of Schools</i> — —	289
<i>The History of John Gilpin</i> — — —	343



THE
T A S K,

A
P O E M.

IN SIX BOOKS.

1877

1877

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1877

A D V E R T I S E M E N T.

THE history of the following production is briefly this : A lady, fond of blank verse, demanded a poem of that kind from the author, and gave him the SOFA for a subject. He obeyed ; and, having much leisure, connected another subject with it ; and pursuing the train of thought to which his situation and turn of mind led him, brought forth at length, instead of the trifle which he at first intended, a serious affair — a Volume.

In the Poem on the subject of Education, he would be very sorry to stand suspected of having aimed his censure at any particular school. His objections are such as naturally apply themselves to schools in general. If there were not, as for the most part there is, wilful neglect in those who manage them, and an omission even of such discipline as they are susceptible of, the objects are yet too numerous for minute attention ; and the aching hearts of ten thousand parents, mourning under the bitterness of all disappointments, attest the truth of the allegation. His quarrel, therefore, is with the mischief at large, and not with any particular instance of it.

A R G U -

ARGUMENT of the FIRST BOOK.

Historical deduction of seats, from the stool to the Sofa.—

A School-boy's ramble.—A walk in the country.—The scene described.—Rural sounds as well as sights delightful.—Another walk.—Mistake, concerning the charms of solitude, corrected.—Colonades commended.—Alcove, and the view from it.—The Wilderness.—The Grove.—The Thresher.—The necessity and the benefits of exercise.—The works of nature superior to and in some instances inimitable by art.—The wearisomeness of what is commonly called a life of pleasure.—Change of scene sometimes expedient.—A common described, and the character of crazy Kate introduced.—Gipsies.—The blessings of civilized life.—That state most favourable to virtue.—The South Sea Islanders compassionate, but chiefly Omai.—His present state of mind supposed.—Civilized life friendly to virtue, but not great cities.—Great cities, and London in particular, allowed their due praise, but censured.—Fete Champetre.—The book concludes with a reflection on the fatal effects of dissipation and effeminacy upon our public measures.

THE
T A S K.

BOOK I.
THE S O F A.

I SING the SOFA. I who lately sang
Truth, Hope, and Charity *, and touch'd with awe
The solemn chords, and with a trembling hand,
Escap'd with pain from that advent'rous flight,
Now seek repose upon an humbler theme;
The theme though humble, yet august and proud
Th' occasion—for the Fair commands the song.

Time was, when cloathing sumptuous or for use,
Save their own painted skins, our fires had none.
As yet black breeches were not; fatten smooth,

* See vol. I.

Or velvet soft, or plush with shaggy pile :

The hardy chief upon the rugged rock

Wash'd by the sea, or on the gravelly bank

Thrown up by wintry torrents roaring loud,

Fearless of wrong, repos'd his weary strength.

Those barb'rous ages past, succeeded next

The birth-day of invention, weak at first,

Dull in design, and clumsy to perform.

Joint-stools were then created ; on three legs

Upborne they stood, Three legs upholding firm

A massy slab, in fashion square or round.

On such a stool immortal Alfred sat,

And sway'd the sceptre of his infant realms ;

And such in ancient halls and mansions drear

May still be seen, but perforated fore

And drill'd in holes the solid oak is found,

By worms voracious eating through and through.

At length a generation more refin'd

Improv'd the simple plan, made three legs four,

Gave

Gave them a twifted form vermicular,
And o'er the feat with plenteous wadding stuff'd
Induced a fplendid cover, green and blue,
Yellow and red, of tap'ftry richly wrought
And woven clofe, or needle-work fublime.
There might ye fee the piony fpread wide,
The full-blown rofe, the fhepherd and his lafs,
Lap-dog and lambkin with black staring eyes,
And parrots with twin cherries in their beak.

Now came the cane from India, fmoother and bright
With Nature's varnifh; fever'd into ftripes
That interlac'd each other, thefe fupplied
Of texture firm a lattice-work, that brac'd
The new machine, and it became a chair.
But reftlefs was the chair; the back erect
Diftrefs'd the weary loins, that felt no eafe;
The flipp'ry feat betray'd the fliiding part
That prefs'd it, and the feet hung dangling down,
Anxious in vain to find the diftant floor.

These for the rich : the rest, whom fate had plac'd
In modest mediocrity, content
With base materials, sat on well-tann'd hides
Obdurate and unyielding, glassy smooth,
With here and there a tuft of crimson yarn,
Or scarlet crevel in the cushion fixt :
If cushion might be call'd, what harder seem'd
Than the firm oak of which the frame was form'd.
No want of timber then was felt or fear'd
In Albion's happy isle. The umber stood
Pond'rous, and fixt by its own massy weight.
But elbows still were wanting ; these, some say,
An Alderman of Cripplegate contriv'd,
And some ascribe th' invention to a priest
Burly and big, and studious of his ease.
But rude at first, and not with easy slope
Receding wide, they press'd against the ribs,
And bruis'd the side, and elevated high
Taught the rais'd shoulders to invade the ears.
Long time elaps'd or e'er our rugged fires
Complain'd,

Complain'd, though incommodiouſly pent in,
And ill at eaſe behind. The Ladies firſt
'Gan murmur, as became the ſofter ſex.
Ingenious fancy, never better pleas'd
Than when employ'd t' accommodate the fair,
Heard the ſweet moan with pity, and devis'd
The ſoft ſettee; one elbow at each end,
And in the miſt an elbow, it receiv'd,
United yet divided, twain at once.
So fit two Kings of Brentford on one throne;
And ſo two citizens who take the air
Cloſe pack'd and ſmiling in a chaiſe and one.
But relaxation of the languid frame
By ſoft recumbency of outſtretch'd limbs,
Was bliſs reſerv'd for happier days. So ſlow
The growth of what is excellent, ſo hard
T'attain perfection in this nether world.
Thus firſt neceſſity invented ſtools,
Convenience next ſuggeſted elbow-chairs,
And luxury th' accompliſh'd S O F A laſt,

The nurse sleeps sweetly, hir'd to watch the sick,
Whom snoring she disturbs. As sweetly he
Who quits the coach-box at the midnight hour
To sleep within the carriage more secure,
His legs depending at the open door.
Sweet sleep enjoys the Curate in his desk,
The tedious Rector drawling o'er his head;
And sweet the Clerk below : but neither sleep
Of lazy Nurse, who snores the sick man dead,
Nor his who quits the box at midnight hour
To slumber in the carriage more secure,
Nor sleep enjoy'd by Curate in his desk,
Nor yet the dozings of the Clerk are sweet,
Compar'd with the repose the SOFA yields.

Oh may I live exempted (while I live
Guiltless of pamper'd appetite obscene)
From pangs arthritic that infest the toe
Of libertine excess. The SOFA suits
The gouty limb, 'tis true ; but gouty limb,

Though

Though on a S O F A, may I never feel :
For I have lov'd the rural walk through lanes
Of grassy swarth close cropt by nibbling sheep,
And skirted thick with intertexture firm
Of thorny boughs : have lov'd the rural walk
O'er hills, through valleys, and by rivers brink,
E'er since a truant boy I pass'd my bounds
T' enjoy a ramble on the banks of Thames.
And still remember, nor without regret,
Of hours that sorrow since has much endear'd,
How oft, my slice of pocket store consum'd,
Still hung'ring, pennyless and far from home,
I fed on scarlet hips and stony haws,
Or blushing crabs, or berries that imboss
The bramble, black as jet, or sloes austere.
Hard fare ! but such as boyish appetite
Disdains not, nor the palate undeprav'd
By culinary arts unsav'ry deems.
No S O F A then awaited my return,
Nor S O F A then I needed. Youth repairs

His wasted spirits quickly, by long toil
Incurring short fatigue ; and though our years
As life declines, speed rapidly away,
And not a year but pilfers as he goes
Some youthful grace that age would gladly keep,
A tooth or auburn lock, and by degrees
Their length and colour from the locks they spare ;
Th' elastic spring of an unwearied foot
That mounts the stile with ease, or leaps the fence,
That play of lungs, inhaling and again
Respiring freely the fresh air, that makes
Swift pace or steep ascent no toil to me,
Mine have not pilfer'd yet ; nor yet impair'd
My relish of fair prospect ; scenes that sooth'd
Or charm'd me young, no longer young, I find
Still sooth'ing, and of power to charm me still.
And witness, dear companion of my walks,
Whose arm this twentieth winter I perceive
Fast lock'd in mine, with pleasure such as love,
Confirm'd by long experience of thy worth

And

And well-tried virtues, could alone inspire—
Witness a joy that thou hast doubled long.
Thou know'st my praise of nature most sincere,
And that my raptures are not conjur'd up
To serve occasions of poetic pomp,
But genuine, and art partner of them all.
How oft upon yon eminence our pace
Has slacken'd to a pause, and we have borne
The rustling wind, scarce conscious that it blew,
While admiration feeding at the eye,
And still unsated, dwelt upon the scene.
Thence with what pleasure have we just discern'd
The distant plough slow-moving, and beside
His lab'ring team, that swerv'd not from the track,
The sturdy swain diminish'd to a boy!
Here Ouse, slow winding through a level plain
Of spacious meads with cattle sprinkled o'er,
Conducts the eye along his sinuous course
Delighted. There, fast rooted in their bank
Stand, never overlook'd, our fav'rite elms,

That

That screen the herdsman's solitary hut;
While far beyond, and overthwart the stream
That as with molten glass inlays the vale,
The sloping land recedes into the clouds;
Displaying on its varied side the grace
Of hedge-row beauties numberless; square tow'r,
Tall spire, from which the sound of chearful bells
Just undulates upon the list'ning ear;
Groves, heaths, and smoaking villages remote.
Scenes must be beautiful which daily view'd
Please daily, and whose novelty survives
Long knowledge and the scrutiny of years.
Praise justly due to those that I describe.

Nor rural sights alone, but rural sounds
Exhilarate the spirit, and restore
The tone of languid Nature. Mighty winds,
That sweep the skirt of some far-spreading wood
Of ancient growth, make music not unlike
The dash of ocean on his winding shore,

And

And lull the spirit while they fill the mind ;
Unnumber'd branches waving in the blast,
And all their leaves fast flutt'ring, all at once.
Nor less compofure waits upon the roar
Of diftant floods, or on the fofter voice
Of neighb'ring fountain, or of rills that fip
Through the cleft rock, and chiming as they fall
Upon loofe pebbles, lofe themfelves at length
In matted grafs, that with a livelier green
Betrays the fecret of their filent courfe.
Nature inanimate employs fweet founds,
But animated Nature fweeter ftill,
To foothe and fatisfy the human ear.
Ten thoufand warblers cheer the day, and one
The live-long night : nor thefe alone, whole notes
Nice-finger'd art muft emulate in vain,
But cawing rooks, and kites that fwim fublime
In ftill repeated circles, screaming loud ;
The jay, the pie, and ev'n the hooding owl
That hails the rifing moon, have charms for me.

Sounds

Sounds inharmonious in themselves and harsh,
Yet heard in scenes where peace for ever reigns,
And only there, please highly for their sake.

Peace to the artist, whose ingenious thought
Devis'd the weather-house, that useful toy !
Fearless of humid air and gathering rains
Forth steps the man, an emblem of myself,
More delicate his tim'rous mate retires.
When Winter soaks the fields, and female feet,
Too weak to struggle with tenacious clay,
Or ford the rivulets, are best at home,
The task of new discoveries falls on me.
At such a season and with such a charge
Once went I forth, and found, till then unknown,
A cottage, whither oft we since repair :
'Tis perch'd upon the green-hill top, but close
Environ'd with a ring of branching elms
That overhang the thatch, itself unseen
Peeps at the vale below ; so thick beset

With foliage of such dark redundant growth,
I call'd the low-roof'd lodge the *peasant's nest*.
And hidden as it is, and far remote
From such unpleasing sounds as haunt the ear
In village or in town, the bay of curs
Incessant, clinking hammers, grinding wheels,
And infants clam'rous whether pleas'd or pain'd,
Oft have I wish'd the peaceful covert mine.
Here, I have said, at least I should possess
The poet's treasure, silence, and indulge
The dreams of fancy, tranquil and secure.
Vain thought! the dweller in that still retreat
Dearly obtains the refuge it affords.
Its elevated scite forbids the wretch
To drink sweet waters of the crystal well;
He dips his bowl into the weedy ditch,
And heavy-laden brings his bev'rage home,
Far-fetch'd and little worth; nor seldom waits,
Dependent on the baker's punctual call,
To hear his creaking panniers at the door,

Angry

Angry and sad, and his last crust consum'd.
So farewell envy of the *peasant's nest*.
If solitude make scant the means of life,
Society for me ! thou seeming sweet,
Be still a pleasing object in my view,
My visit still, but never mine abode.

Not distant far, a length of colonade
Invites us. Monument of ancient taste,
Now scorn'd, but worthy of a better fate.
Our fathers knew the value of a screen
From sultry suns, and in their shaded walks
And long-protracted bow'rs, enjoy'd at noon
The gloom and coolness of declining day.
We bear our shades about us ; self-depriv'd
Of other screen, the thin umbrella spread,
And range an Indian waste without a tree.
Thanks to * *Benevolus*—he spares me yet

* John Courtney Throckmorton, Esq. of Weston Underwood.

These chesnuts rang'd in corresponding lines,
And though himself so polish'd, still reprieves
The obsolete proximity of shade.

Descending now (but cautious, lest too fast)
A sudden steep, upon a rustic bridge
We pass a gulph, in which the willows dip
Their pendent boughs, stooping as if to drink.
Hence, ankle-deep in moss and flow'ry thyme,
We mount again, and feel at ev'ry step
Our foot half sunk in hillocks green and soft,
Rais'd by the mole, the miner of the soil,
He, not unlike the great ones of mankind,
Disfigures earth, and, plotting in the dark,
Toils much to earn a monumental pile,
That may record the mischiefs he has done.

The summit gain'd, behold the proud alcove
That crowns it! yet not all its pride secures
The grand retreat from injuries impress'd

By

By rural carvers, who with knives deface
The pannels, leaving an obscure, rude name,
In characters uncouth, and spelt amiss.
So strong the zeal t' immortalize himself
Beats in the breast of man, that ev'n a few
Few transient years won from th' abyss abhorr'd
Of blank oblivion, seem a glorious prize,
And even to a clown. Now roves the eye,
And posted on this speculative height
Exults in its command. The sheep-fold here
Pours out its fleecy tenants o'er the glebe.
At first, progressive as a stream, they seek
The middle field; but scatter'd by degrees,
Each to his choice, soon whiten all the land.
There, from the sun-burnt hay-field, homeward creeps
The loaded wain, while, lighten'd of its charge,
The wain that meets it passes swiftly by,
The boorish driver leaning o'er his team
Vociferous, and impatient of delay.
Nor less attractive is the woodland scene,

Diversified

Diversify'd with trees of ev'ry growth,
Alike, yet various. Here the grey smooth trunks
Of ash or lime, or beech, distinctly shine,
Within the twilight of their distant shades ;
There, lost behind a rising ground, the wood
Seems sunk, and shorten'd to its topmost boughs.
No tree in all the grove but has its charms,
Though each its hue peculiar ; paler some,
And of a wannish grey ; the willow such,
And poplar, that with silver lines his leaf,
And ash far-stretching his umbrageous arm :
Of deeper green the elm ; and deeper still,
Lord of the woods, the long-surviving oak.
Some glossy-leav'd and shining in the sun,
The maple, and the beech of oily nuts
Prolific, and the lime at dewy eve
Diffusing odors : nor unnoted pass
The sycamore, capricious in attire,
Now green, now tawny, and, ere autumn yet
Have chang'd the woods, in scarlet honors bright.

O'er these, but far beyond (a spacious map
Of hill and valley interpos'd between)
The Ouse, dividing the well-water'd land,
Now glitters in the sun, and now retires,
As bashful, yet impatient to be seen.

Hence the declivity is sharp and short,
And such the re-ascent ; between them weeps
A little Naiad her improv'ish'd urn
All summer long, which winter fills again.
The folded gates would bar my progress now,
But that the * Lord of this inclos'd demesne,
Communicative of the good he owns,
Admits me to a share : the guiltless eye
Commits no wrong, nor wastes what it enjoys.
Refreshing change ! where now the blazing sun ?
By short transition we have lost his glare,
And stepp'd at once into a cooler clime.
Ye fallen avenues ! once more I mourn

* See the foregoing note.

Your fate unmerited, once more rejoice
That yet a remnant of your race survives.
How airy and how light the graceful arch,
Yet awful as the consecrated roof
Re-echoing pious anthems! while beneath
The chequer'd earth seems restless as a flood
Brush'd by the wind. So sportive is the light
Shot through the boughs, it dances as they dance,
Shadow and sunshine intermingling quick,
And dark'ning and enlight'ning, as the leaves
Play wanton, ev'ry moment, ev'ry spot.

And now, with nerves new-brac'd and spirits cheer'd,
We tread the wilderness, whose well-roll'd walks,
With curvature of flow and easy sweep,
Deception innocent—give ample space
To narrow bounds. The grove receives us next;
Between the upright shafts of whose tall elms
We may discern the thresher at his task.
Thump after thump, resounds the constant flail,

That seems to swing uncertain, and yet falls
Full on the destin'd ear. Wide flies the chaff;
The rustling straw sends up a frequent mist
Of atoms, sparkling in the noon-day beam.
Come hither, ye that press your beds of down
And sleep not: see him sweating o'er his bread
Before he eats it.—'Tis the primal curse,
But soften'd into mercy; made the pledge
Of chearful days, and nights without a groan.

By ceaseless action, all that is, subsists.
Constant rotation of th' unwearied wheel
That nature rides upon, maintains her health,
Her beauty, her fertility. She dreads
An instant's pause, and lives but while she moves.
Its own revolvency upholds the world.
Winds from all quarters agitate the air,
And fit the limpid element for use,
Else noxious: oceans, rivers, lakes, and streams,
All feel the fresh'ning impulse, and are cleans'd

By

By restless undulation ; ev'n the oak
Thrives by the rude concussion of the storm :
He seems indeed indignant, and to feel
Th' impression of the blast with proud disdain,
Frowning as if in his unconscious arm
He held the thunder. But the monarch owes
His firm stability to what he scorns,
More fixt below, the more disturb'd above.
The law, by which all creatures else are bound,
Binds man the lord of all. Himself derives
No mean advantage from a kindred cause,
From strenuous toil his hours of sweetest ease.
The sedentary stretch their lazy length
When custom bids, but no refreshment find,
For none they need : the languid eye, the cheek
Deserted of its bloom, the flaccid, shrunk,
And wither'd muscle, and the vapid soul,
Reproach their owner with that love of rest
To which he forfeits ev'n the rest he loves.
Not such th' alert and active. Measure life

By its true worth, the comforts it affords,
And theirs alone seems worthy of the name.
Good health, and its associate in the most,
Good temper; spirits prompt to undertake,
And not soon spent, though in an arduous task;
The pow'rs of fancy and strong thought are theirs;
Ev'n age itself seems privileg'd in them
With clear exemption from its own defects.
A sparkling eye beneath a wrinkled front
The vet'ran shows, and gracing a grey beard
With youthful smiles, descends toward the grave
Sprightly, and old almost without decay.

Like a coy maiden, ease, when courted most,
Farthest retires—an idol, at whose shrine
Who oft'nest sacrifice are favor'd least.
The love of Nature, and the scenes she draws,
Is Nature's dictate. Strange! there should be found,
Who, self-imprison'd in their proud saloons,
Renounce the odors of the open field

For

For the unscented fictions of the loom ;
Who, satisfy'd with only pencil'd scenes,
Prefer to the performance of a God
Th' inferior wonders of an artist's hand.
Lovely indeed the mimic works of art,
But Nature's works far lovelier. I admire—
None more admires the painter's magic skill,
Who shews me that which I shall never see,
Conveys a distant country into mine,
And throws Italian light on English walls :
But imitative strokes can do no more
Than please the eye, sweet Nature ev'ry sense.
The air salubrious of her lofty hills,
The chearing fragrance of her dewy vales,
And music of her woods—no works of man,
May rival these ; these all bespeak a power
Peculiar, and exclusively her own.
Beneath the open sky she spreads the feast ;
'Tis free to all—'tis ev'ry day renew'd ;
Who scorns it, starves deservedly at home.

He does not scorn it, who, imprison'd long
In some unwholesome dungeon, and a prey
To fallow sickness, which the vapors, dank
And clammy, of his dark abode have bred,
Escapes at last to liberty and light :
His cheek recovers soon its healthful hue,
His eye relumes its extinguish'd fires ;
He walks, he leaps, he runs—is wing'd with joy,
And riots in the sweets of ev'ry breeze.
He does not scorn it, who has long endur'd
A fever's agonies, and fed on drugs.
Nor yet the mariner, his blood inflam'd
With acrid salts ; his very heart athirst
To gaze at Nature in her green array,
Upon the ship's tall side he stands, possess'd
With visions prompted by intense desire :
Fair fields appear below, such as he left
Far distant, such as he would die to find—
He seeks them headlong, and is seen no more,

The

The spleen is feldom felt where Flora reigns ;
The low'ring eye, the petulance, the frown,
And fullen fadness, that o'ershade, distort,
And mar the face of beauty, when no cause
For such immeasurable woe appears,
These Flora banishes, and gives the fair
Sweet smiles, and bloom less transient than her own.
It is the constant revolution, stale
And tasteless, of the same repeated joys,
That palls and satiates, and makes languid life
A pedler's pack, that bows the bearer down.
Health suffers, and the spirits ebb ; the heart
Recoils from its own choice—at the full feast
Is famish'd—finds no music in the song,
No smartness in the jest, and wonders why.
Yet thousands still desire to journey on,
Though halt and weary of the path they tread.
The paralytic, who can hold her cards,
But cannot play them, borrows a friend's hand
To deal and shuffle, to divide and sort

Her

Her mingled suits and sequences, and sits
Spectatress both and spectacle, a sad
And silent cypher, while her proxy plays.
Others are dragg'd into the crowded room
Between supporters ; and, once seated, sit
Through downright inability to rise,
Till the stout bearers lift the corpse again.
These speak a loud memento. Yet ev'n these
Themselves love life, and cling to it, as he
That overhangs a torrent, to a twig.
They love it, and yet loath it ; fear to die,
Yet scorn the purposes for which they live.
Then wherefore not renounce them ? No—the dread,
The slavish dread of solitude, that breeds
Reflection and remorse, the fear of shame,
And their invet'rate habits, all forbid.

Whom call we gay ? That honor has been long
The boast of mere pretenders to the name.
The innocent are gay—the lark is gay,

That

That dries his feathers, saturate with dew,
Beneath the rosy cloud, while yet the beams
Of day-spring overshoot his humble nest.
The peasant too, a witness of his song,
Himself a songster, is as gay as he.
But save me from the gaiety of those
Whose head-aches nail them to a noon-day bed ;
And save me too from theirs whose haggard eyes
Flash desperation, and betray their pangs
For property stripp'd off by cruel chance ;
From gaiety that fills the bones with pain,
The mouth with blasphemy, the heart with woe.

The earth was made so various, that the mind
Of desultory man, studious of change,
And pleas'd with novelty, might be indulg'd.
Prospects, however lovely, may be seen
Till half their beauties fade ; the weary sight,
Too well acquainted with their smiles, slides off
Fastidious, seeking less familiar scenes.

Then

Then snug inclosures in the shelter'd vale,
Where frequent hedges intercept the eye,
Delight us, happy to renounce awhile,
Not senseless of its charms, what still we love,
That such short absence may endear it more.
Then forests, or the savage rock, may please,
That hides the sea-mew in his hollow clefts
Above the reach of man : his hoary head,
Conspicuous many a league, the mariner,
Bound homeward, and in hope already there,
Greets with three cheers exulting. At his waist
A girdle of half-wither'd shrubs he shows,
And at his feet the baffled billows die.
The common, overgrown with fern, and rough
With prickly gorse, that, shapeless and deform'd,
And dang'rous to the touch, has yet its bloom,
And decks itself with ornaments of gold,
Yields no unpleasing ramble ; there the turf
Smells fresh, and, rich in odorif'rous herbs

And

And fungous fruits of earth, regales the sense
With luxury of unexpected sweets.

There often wanders one, whom better days
Saw better clad, in cloak of fatten trimm'd
With lace, and hat with splendid ribband bound.
A serving maid was she, and fell in love
With one who left her, went to sea, and died.
Her fancy followed him through foaming waves
To distant shores, and she would sit and weep
At what a sailor suffers; fancy too,
Delusive most where warmest wishes are,
Would oft anticipate his glad return,
And dream of transports she was not to know.
She heard the doleful tidings of his death,
And never smil'd again. And now she roams
The dreary waste; there spends the livelong day,
And there, unless when charity forbids,
The livelong night. A tatter'd apron hides,
Worn as a cloak, and hardly hides a gown

More

More tatter'd still, and both but ill conceal.
A bosom heav'd with never-ceasing sighs.
She begs an idle pin of all she meets,
And hoards them in her sleeve; but needful food,
Though press'd with hunger oft, or comelier cloaths,
Though pinch'd with cold, asks never.—Kate is craz'd.

I see a column of slow-rising smoke
O'ertop the lofty wood that skirts the wild.
A vagabond and useless tribe there eat
Their miserable meal. A kettle, slung
Between two poles upon a stick transverse,
Receives the morsel; flesh obscene of dog,
Or vermin, or, at best, of cock purloin'd
From his accustom'd perch. Hard-faring race!
They pick their fuel out of ev'ry hedge,
Which, kindled with dry leaves, just saves unquench'd
The spark of life. The sportive wind blows wide
Their flutt'ring rags, and shows a tawny skin,
The vellum of the pedigree they claim.

Great

Great skill have they in palmistry, and more
To conjure clean away the gold they touch,
Conveying worthless dross into its place ;
Loud when they beg, dumb only when they steal.
Strange ! that a creature rational, and cast
In human mould, should brutalize by choice
His nature, and, though capable of arts
By which the world might profit and himself,
Self-banish'd from society, prefer
Such squalid sloth to honorable toil !
Yet even these, though, feigning sickness off,
They swathe the forehead, drag the limping limb,
And vex their flesh with artificial sores,
Can change their whine into a mirthful note
When safe occasion offers, and with dance,
And music of the bladder and the bag,
Beguile their woes, and make the woods resound.
Such health and gaiety of heart enjoy
The houseless rovers of the sylvan world ;
And breathing wholesome air, and wand'ring much,

Need

Need other phyfic none to heal th' effects
Of loathsome diet, penury, and cold.

Blest he, though undistinguish'd from the crowd
By wealth or dignity, who dwells secure,
Where man, by nature fierce, has laid aside
His fierceness, having learnt, though slow to learn,
The manners and the arts of civil life.
His wants, indeed, are many; but supply
Is obvious; plac'd within the easy reach
Of temp'rate wishes and industrious hands.
Here virtue thrives as in her proper soil;
Not rude and furly, and beset with thorns,
And terrible to fight, as when she springs
(If e'er she spring spontaneous) in remote
And barb'rous climes, where violence prevails,
And strength is lord of all; but gentle, kind,
By culture tam'd, by liberty refresh'd,
And all her fruits by radiant truth matur'd.
War and the chace engross the savage whole;

War follow'd for revenge, or to supplant
The envied tenants of some happier spot,
The chace for sustenance, precarious trust!
His hard condition with severe constraint
Binds all his faculties, forbids all growth
Of wisdom, proves a school in which he learns
Sly circumvention, unrelenting hate,
Mean self-attachment, and scarce aught beside.
Thus fare the shiv'ring natives of the north,
And thus the rangers of the western world,
Where it advances far into the deep;
Towards th' Antarctic. Ev'n the favor'd isles
So lately found, although the constant sun
Cheer all their seasons with a grateful smile,
Can boast but little virtue; and inert
Through plenty, lose in morals what they gain
In manners, victims of luxurious ease.
These therefore I can pity, plac'd remote
From all that science traces, art invents,
Or inspiration teaches; and inclosed

In boundless oceans, never to be pass'd
By navigators uninformed as they,
Or plough'd perhaps by British bark again.
But far beyond the rest, and with most cause,
Thee, gentle * savage ! whom no love of thee
Or thine, but curiosity perhaps,
Or else vain glory, prompted us to draw
Forth from thy native bow'rs, to show thee here
With what superior skill we can abuse
The gifts of Providence, and squander life.
The dream is past ; and thou hast found again
Thy cocoas and bananas, palms and yams,
And homestall thatch'd with leaves. But hast thou found
Their former charms ? And having seen our state,
Our palaces, our ladies, and our pomp
Of equipage, our gardens, and our sports,
And heard our music ; are thy simple friends,
Thy simple fare, and all thy plain delights,
As dear to thee as once ? And have thy joys
Lost nothing by comparison with ours ?

Rude

* Omia.

Rude as thou art (for we return'd thee rude
And ignorant, except of outward show)
I cannot think thee yet so dull of heart
And spiritless, as never to regret
Sweets tasted here, and left as soon as known.
Methinks I see thee straying on the beach,
And asking of the surge that bathes thy foot
If ever it has wash'd our distant shore.
I see thee weep, and thine are honest tears,
A patriot's for his country: thou art sad
At thought of her forlorn and abject state,
From which no power of thine can raise her up.
Thus fancy paints thee, and, though apt to err,
Perhaps errs little when she paints thee thus.
She tells me, too, that duly ev'ry morn
Thou climb'st the mountain top, with eager eye
Exploring far and wide the wat'ry waste
For sight of ship from England. Ev'ry speck
Seen in the dim horizon, turns thee pale
With conflict of contending hopes and fears.

But comes at last the dull and dusky eve,
And sends thee to thy cabbin, well-prepar'd
To dream all night of what the day denied.
Alas! expect it not. We found no bait
To tempt us in thy country. Doing good,
Disinterested good, is not our trade.
We travel far 'tis true; but not for nought;
And must be brib'd to compass earth again
By other hopes and richer fruits than yours.

But though true worth and virtue, in the mild
And genial soil of cultivated life
Thrive most, and may perhaps thrive only there,
Yet not in cities oft. In proud and gay
And gain-devoted cities; thither flow,
As to a common and most noisome sewer,
The dregs and fæculence of ev'ry land.
In cities foul example on most minds
Begets its likeness. Rank abundance breeds
In gross and pamper'd cities sloth and lust,

And

And wontonness and gluttonous excess.
In cities, vice is hidden with most ease,
Or seen with least reproach ; and virtue, taught
By frequent lapse, can hope no triumph there
Beyond th' atchievement of successful flight.
I do confess them nurseries of the arts,
In which they flourish most : where, in the beams
Of warm encouragement, and in the eye
Of public note, they reach their perfect size.
Such London is, by taste and wealth proclaim'd
The fairest capital of all the world,
By riot and incontinence the worst.
There, touch'd by Reynolds, a dull blank becomes
A lucid mirror, in which Nature sees
All her reflected features. Bacon there
Gives more than female beauty to a stone,
And Chatham's eloquence to marble lips.
Nor does the chissel occupy alone
The pow'rs of sculpture, but the style as much ;
Each province of her art her equal care.

With nice incision of her guided steel
She ploughs a brazen field, and clothes a soil
So sterile, with what charms soe'er she will,
The richest scen'ry and the loveliest forms.
Where finds philosophy her eagle eye,
With which she gazes at yon burning disk
Undazzled, and detects and counts his spots ?
In London ; where her implements exact
With which she calculates, computes, and scans
All distance, motion, magnitude, and now
Measures an atom, and now girds a world ?
In London ; where has commerce such a mart,
So rich, so throng'd, so drain'd, and so supplied
As London, opulent, enlarged, and still
Increasing London ? Babylon of old
Not more the glory of the earth, than she
A more accomplish'd world's chief glory now.

She has her praise, Now mark a spot or two
That so much beauty would do well to purge ;

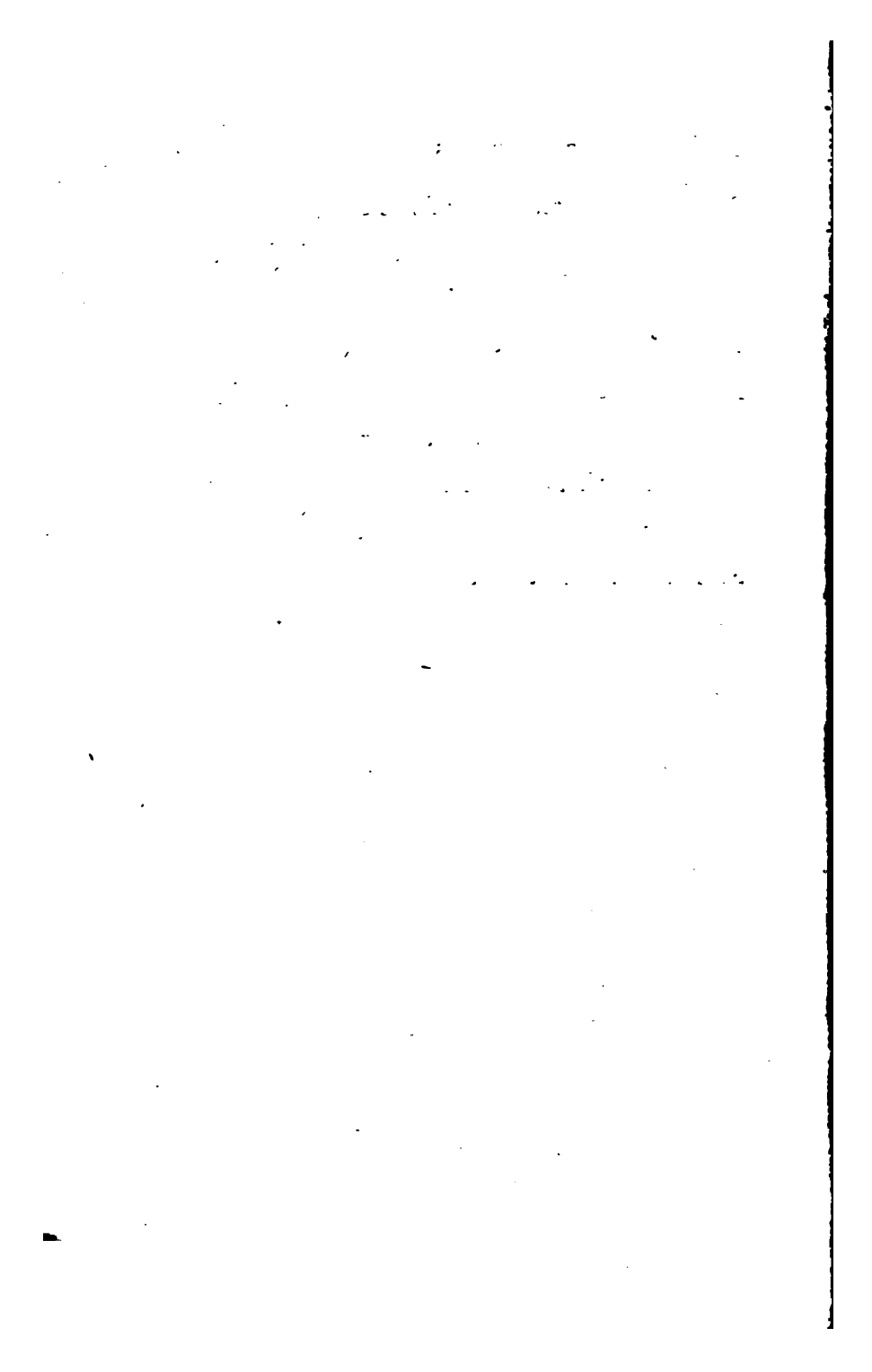
And

And show this queen of cities, that so fair
May yet be foul, so witty, yet not wise.
It is not seemly, nor of good report,
That she is slack in discipline; more prompt
T' avenge than to prevent the breach of law:
That she is rigid in denouncing death
On petty robbers, and indulges life
And liberty, and oft-times honor too,
To peculators of the public gold:
That thieves at home must hang; but he that puts
Into his overgorg'd and bloated purse
The wealth of Indian provinces, escapes.
Nor is it well, nor can it come to good,
That, through profane and infidel contempt
Of holy writ, she has presum'd t' annul
And abrogate, as roundly as she may,
The total ordonnance and will of God;
Advancing fashion to the post of truth,
And cent'ring all authority in modes
And customs of her own, till sabbath rites

Have dwindled into unrespected forms,
And knees and haffocks are well-nigh divorc'd.

God made the country, and man made the town :
What wonder then, that health and virtue, gifts
That can alone make sweet the bitter draught
That life holds out to all, should most abound
And least be threaten'd in the fields and groves ?
Possess ye therefore, ye who, borne about
In chariots and sedans, know no fatigue
But that of idleness, and taste no scenes
But such as art contrives, possess ye still
Your element ; there only ye can shine,
There only minds like yours can do no harm,
Our groves were planted to console at noon
The pensive wand'rer in their shades. At eve
The moon-beam, sliding softly in between
The sleeping leaves, is all the light they wish,
Birds warbling all the music. We can spare
The splendor of your lamps, they but eclipse

Our softer satellite. Your songs confound
Our more harmonious notes : the thrush departs
Scar'd, and th' offended nightingale is mute.
There is a public mischief in your mirth,
It plagues your country. Folly such as your's,
Grac'd with a sword, and worthier of a fan,
Has made, what enemies could ne'er have done,
Our arch of empire, stedfast but for you,
A mutilated structure, soon to fall.



THE
T A S K.

BOOK II.

ARGUMENT of the SECOND BOOK.

Reflections suggested by the conclusion of the former book.—

Peace among the nations recommended on the ground of their common fellowship in sorrow.—Prodigies enumerated.—Sicilian earthquakes—Man rendered obnoxious to these calamities by sin.—God the agent in them.—The philosophy that stops at secondary causes, reprovèd.—Our own late miscarriages accounted for—Satirical notice taken of our trips to Fontainebleau—But the pulpit, not satire, the proper engine of reformation.—The Reverend Advertiser of engraved sermons.—Petit-maitre parson.—The good preacher.—Picture of a theatrical clerical coxcomb.—Story-tellers and jesters in the pulpit reprovèd.—Apoplexy to popular applause. ¶ Retailers of ancient philosophy expostulated with.—Sum of the whole matter.—Effects of sacerdotal mismanagement on the laity.—Their folly and extravagance.—The mischiefs of profusion.—Profusion itself, with all its consequent evils, ascribed, as to its principal cause, to the want of discipline in the Universities.

THE TASK.

BOOK II.

THE TIME-PIECE.

Oh for a lodge in some vast wilderness,
Some boundless contiguity of shade,
Where rumour of oppression and deceit,
Of unsuccessful or successful war,
Might never reach me more. My ear is pain'd,
My soul is sick with ev'ry day's report
Of wrong and outrage with which earth is fill'd.
There is no flesh in man's obdurate heart,
It does not feel for man; the nat'ral bond
Of brotherhood is sever'd as the flax
That falls afunder at the touch of fire.

He

He finds his fellow guilty of a skin
Not colour'd like his own, and having pow'r
T' inforce the wrong, for such a worthy cause
Dooms and devotes him as his lawful prey.
Lands intersected by a narrow frith
Abhor each other. Mountains interpos'd,
Make enemies of nations, who had else
Like kindred drops been mingled into one.
Thus man devotes his brother, and destroys;
And worse than all, and most to be deplored
As human nature's broadest, foulest blot,
Chains him, and tasks him, and exacts his sweat
With stripes, that mercy with a bleeding heart
Weeps when she sees inflicted on a beast.
Then what is man? And what man seeing this,
And having human feelings, does not blush
And hang his head, to think himself a man?
I would not have a slave to till my ground,
To carry me, to fan me while I sleep,
And tremble when I wake, for all the wealth
That sinews bought and sold have ever earn'd.

No: dear as freedom is, and in my heart's
Just estimation priz'd above all price,
I had much rather be myself the slave
And wear the bonds, than fasten them on him.
We have no slaves at home.—Then why abroad?
And they themselves, once ferried o'er the wave
That part us, are emancipate and loos'd.
Slaves cannot breathe in England; if their lungs
Receive our air, that moment they are free,
They touch our country and their shackles fall:
That's noble, and bespeaks a nation proud
And jealous of the blessing. Spread it then,
And let it circulate through ev'ry vein
Of all your empire; that where Britain's power
Is felt, mankind may feel her mercy too.

Sure there is need of social intercourse,
Benevolence, and peace, and mutual aid,
Between the nations, in a world that seems
To toll the death-bell of its own decease,

And

And by the voice of all its elements
To preach the gen'ral doom *. When were the winds
Let slip with such a warrant to destroy ;
When did the waves so haughtily o'erleap
Their ancient barriers, deluging the dry ?
Fires from beneath, and meteors † from above,
Portentous, unexampled, unexplained,
Have kindled beacons in the skies, and th' old
And crazy earth has had her shaking fits
More frequent, and forgone her usual rest.
Is it a time to wrangle, when the props
And pillars of our planet seem to fail,
And Nature ‡ with a dim and sickly eye
To wait the close of all ? But grant her end
More distant, and that prophecy demands
A longer respite, unaccomplish'd yet ;

Still

* Alluding to the calamities at Jamaica.

† August 18, 1783.

‡ Alluding to the fog that covered both Europe and Asia during the whole summer of 1783.

Still they are frowning signals, and bespeak
Displeasure in his breast who smites the earth
Or heals it, makes it languish or rejoice.
And 'tis but seemly, that where all deserve
And stand exposed by common peccancy
To what no few have felt, there should be peace,
And brethren in calamity should love.

Alas for Sicily! rude fragments now
Lie scatter'd where the shapely column stood:
Her palaces are dust. In all her streets
The voice of singing and the sprightly chord
Are silent. Revelry and dance and show
Suffer a syncope and solemn pause;
While God performs upon the trembling stage
Of his own works, his dreadful part alone.
How does the earth receive him?—With what signs
Of gratulation and delight, her king?
Pours she not all her choicest fruits abroad,
Her sweetest flowers, her aromatic gums,

Disclosing paradise where'er he treads ?

She quakes at his approach. Her hollow womb

Conceiving thunders, through a thousand deeps

And fiery caverns roars beneath his foot.

The hills move lightly and the mountains smoke,

For he has touch'd them. From th' extremest point

Of elevation down into th' abyfs,

His wrath is busy and his frown is felt.

The rocks fall headlong and the vallies rise,

The rivers die into offensive pools,

And, charged with putrid verdure, breathe a gross

And mortal nuisance into all the air.

What solid was, by transformation strange

Grows fluid, and the fixt and rooted earth

Tormented into billows heaves and swells,

Or with vortiginous and hideous whirl

Sucks down its prey insatiable. Immense

The tumult and the overthrow, the pangs

And agonies of human and of brute

Multitudes, fugitive on ev'ry side,

And

And fugitive in vain. The fylvan scene
Migrates uplifted, and with all its soil
Alighting in far distant fields, finds out
A new possessor, and survives the change.
Ocean has caught the frenzy, and upwrought
To an enormous and o'erbearing height,
Not by a mighty wind, but by that voice
Which winds and waves obey, invades the shore
Refistless. Never such a sudden flood,
Upridged so high, and sent on such a charge,
Possess'd an inland scene. Where now the throng
That press'd the beach, and hasty to depart
Look'd to the sea for safety? They are gone,
Gone with the reflux wave into the deep,
A prince with half his people. Ancient tow'rs,
And roofs embattled high, the gloomy scenes
Where beauty oft and letter'd worth consume
Life in the unproductive shades of death,
Fall prone; the pale inhabitants come forth,
And, happy in their unforeseen release

From all the rigors of restraint, enjoy
The terrors of the day that sets them free.
Who then that has thee, would not hold thee fast
Freedom ! whom they that lose thee, so regret,
That ev'n a judgment making way for thee,
Seems in their eyes, a mercy, for thy sake.

Such evil sin hath wrought ; and such a flame
Kindled in heaven, that it burns down to earth,
And in the furious inquest that it makes
On God's behalf, lays waste his fairest works.
The very elements, though each be meant
The minister of man, to serve his wants,
Conspire against him. With his breath, he draws
A plague into his blood. And cannot use
Life's necessary means, but he must die.
Storms rise t' o'erwhelm him : or if stormy winds
Rise not, the waters of the deep shall rise,
And needing none assistance of the storm,
Shall roll themselves ashore, and reach him there.

The

The earth shall shake him out of all his holds,
Or make his house his grave. Nor so content,
Shall counterfeit the motions of the flood,
And drown him in her dry and dusty gulphs.
What then—were they the wicked above all,
And we the righteous, whose fast-anchor'd isle
Moved not, while their's was rock'd like a light skiff,
The sport of ev'ry wave? No: none are clear,
And none than we more guilty. But where all
Stand chargeable with guilt, and to the shafts
Of wrath obnoxious, God may chuse his mark:
May punish, if he please, the less, to warn
The more malignant. If he spar'd not them,
Tremble and be amazed at thine escape
Far guiltier England, lest he spare not thee,

Happy the man who sees a God employed
In all the good and ill that checquer life!
Resolving all events, with their effects
And manifold results, into the will

And arbitration wise of the Supreme.
Did not his eye rule all things, and intend
The least of our concerns (since from the least
The greatest oft originate), could chance
Find place in his dominion, or dispose
One lawless particle to thwart his plan,
Then God might be surprized, and unforeseen
Contingence might alarm him, and disturb
The smooth and equal course of his affairs.
This truth, philosophy, though eagle-eyed
In nature's tendencies, oft overlooks,
And, having found his instrument, forgets
Or disregards, or more presumptuous still
Denies the pow'r that wields it. God proclaims
His hot displeasure against foolish men
That live an atheist life : involves the heav'n
In tempests, quits his grasp upon the winds
And gives them all their fury : bids a plague
Kindle a fiery boil upon the skin,
And putrify the breath of blooming health.

He

He calls for famine, and the meagre fiend
Blows mildew from between his shrivel'd lips,
And taints the golden ear. He springs his mines,
And desolates a nation at a blast.
Forth steps the spruce philosopher, and tells
Of homogeneal and discordant springs
And principles ; of causes how they work
By necessary laws their sure effects,
Of action and re-action. He has found
The source of the disease that nature feels,
And bids the world take heart and banish fear.
Thou fool ! will thy discov'ry of the cause
Suspend th' effect or heal it ? Has not God
Still wrought by means since first he made the world,
And did he not of old employ his means
To drown it ? What is his creation less
Than a capacious reservoir of means
Form'd for his use, and ready at his will ?
Go, dress thine eyes with eye-salve, ask of him,

Or ask of whomsoever he has taught,
And learn, though late, the genuine cause of all.

England, with all thy faults, I love thee still
My country! and while yet a nook is left
Where English minds and manners may be found,
Shall be constrain'd to love thee. Though thy climate
Be fickle, and thy year, most part, deform'd
With dripping rains, or wither'd by a frost,
I would not yet exchange thy sullen skies
And fields without a flower, for warmer France
With all her vines; nor for Ausonia's groves
Of golden fruitage and her myrtle bow'rs.
To shake thy senate, and from heights sublime
Of patriot eloquence to flash down fire
Upon thy foes, was never meant my task;
But I can feel thy fortunes, and partake
Thy joys and sorrows with as true a heart
As any thund'rer there. And I can feel
Thy follies too, and with a just disdain

Frown

Frown at effeminates, whose very looks
Reflect dishonor on the land I love.
How, in the name of soldiership and sense,
Should England prosper, when such things, as smooth
And tender as a girl, all effenced o'er
With odors, and as profligate as sweet,
Who sell their laurel for a myrtle wreath,
And love when they should fight; when such as these
Presume to lay their hand upon the ark
Of her magnificent and awful cause?
Time was when it was praise and boast enough
In ev'ry clime, and travel where we might,
That we were born her children. Praise enough
To fill th' ambition of a private man,
That Chatham's language was his mother tongue,
And Wolfe's great name compatriot with his own.
Farewell those honors, and farewell with them
The hope of such hereafter. They have fall'n
Each in his field of glory: one in arms,
And one in council. Wolfe upon the lap

Of

Of smiling victory that moment won,
And Chatham, heart-sick of his country's shame.
They made us many soldiers. Chatham still
Consulting England's happiness at home,
Secured it by an unforgiving frown
If any wrong'd her. Wolfe, where'er he fought,
Put so much of his heart into his act,
That his example had a magnet's force,
And all were swift to follow whom all loved.
Those funs are set. Oh rise some other such !
Or all that we have left, is empty talk
Of old achievements, and despair of new.

Now hoist the sail, and let the streamers float
Upon the wanton breezes. Strew the deck
With lavender, and sprinkle liquid sweets,
That no rude savour maritime invade
The nose of nice nobility. Breathe soft
Ye clarionets, and softer still ye flutes,
That winds and waters lull'd by magic sounds

May

May bear us smoothly to the Gallic shore.
True, we have lost an empire—let it pass.
True, we may thank the perfidy of France
That pick'd the jewel out of England's crown,
With all the cunning of an envious shrew.
And let that pass—'twas but a trick of state.
A brave man knows no malice, but at once
Forgets in peace, the injuries of war,
And gives his direst foe a friend's embrace.
And shamed as we have been, to th' very beard
Braved and defied, and in our own sea proved
Too weak for those decisive blows, that once
Insured us mast'ry there, we yet retain
Some small pre-eminence, we justly boast
At least superior jockeyship, and claim
The honors of the turf as all our own.
Go then, well worthy of the praise ye seek,
And show the shame ye might conceal at home,
In foreign eyes!—be grooms, and win the plate,
Where once your nobler fathers won a crown!—

'Tis

'Tis gen'rous to communicate your skill
To those that need it. Folly is soon learn'd :
And, under such preceptors, who can fail !

There is a pleasure in poetic pains
Which only poets know. The shifts and turns,
Th' expedients and inventions multiform
To which the mind resorts, in chace of terms
Though apt, yet coy, and difficult to win.—
T' arrest the fleeting images that fill
The mirror of the mind, and hold them fast,
And force them sit, 'till he has pencil'd off
A faithful likenefs of the forms he views ;
Then to dispose his copies with such art
That each may find its most propitious light,
And shine by situation, hardly less,
Than by the labor and the skill it cost,
Are occupations of the poet's mind
So pleasing, and that steal away the thought
With such address, from themes of sad import,

That lost in his own musings, happy man !
He feels th' anxieties of life, denied
Their wonted entertainment, all retire.
Such joys has he that sings. But ah ! not such,
Or seldom such, the hearers of his song.
Fastidious, or else listless, or perhaps
Aware of nothing arduous in a task
They never undertook, they little note
His dangers or escapes, and haply find
There least amusement where he found the most.
But is amusement all ? studious of song,
And yet ambitious not to sing in vain,
I would not trifle merely, though the world
Be loudest in their praise who do no more.
Yet what can satire, whether grave or gay ?
It may correct a foible, may chastise
The freaks of fashion, regulate the dress,
Retrench a sword-blade, or displace a patch ;
But where are its sublimer trophies found ?
What vice has it subdued ? whose heart reclaim'd

By

By rigour, or whom laugh'd into reform?

Alas ! Leviathan is not so tamed :

Laugh'd at, he laughs again ; and, stricken hard,

Turns to the stroke his adamantine scales,

That fear no discipline of human hands.

The pulpit therefore (and I name it, fill'd

With solemn awe, that bids me well beware

With what intent I touch that holy thing)

The pulpit (when the fat'rist has at last,

Strutting and vap'ring in an empty school,

Spent all his force and made no profelyte)

I say the pulpit (in the sober use

Of its legitimate, peculiar pow'rs)

Must stand acknowledg'd, while the world shall stand,

The most important and effectual guard,

Support and ornament of virtue's cause.

There stands the messenger of truth. There stands

The legate of the skies. His theme divine,

His office sacred, his credentials clear.

By him, the violated law speaks out
Its thunders, and by him, in strains as sweet
As angels use, the gospel whispers peace.
He stablishes the strong, restores the weak,
Reclaims the wand'rer, binds the broken heart,
And, arm'd himself in panoply complete
Of heav'nly temper, furnishes with arms
Bright as his own, and trains, by ev'ry rule
Of holy discipline, to glorious war,
The sacramental host of God's elect.
Are all such teachers? would to heav'n all were !
But hark—the Doctor's voice—fast wedg'd between
Two empirics he stands, and with swoln cheeks
Inspires the news, his trumpet. Keener far
Than all invective is his bold harrangue,
While through that public organ of report
He hails the clergy ; and defying shame,
Announces to the world his own and theirs.
He teaches those to read, whom schools dismiss'd,
And colleges untaught ; fells accent, tone,

And

And emphasis in score, and gives to pray'r
Th' *adagio* and *andante* it demands.
He grinds divinity of other days
Down into modern use; transforms old print
To zig-zag manuscript, and cheats the eyes
Of gall'ry critics by a thousand arts.—
Are there who purchase of the Doctor's ware?
Oh name it not in Gath!—it cannot be,
That grave and learned Clerks should need such aid.
He doubtless is in sport, and does but dröll,
Assuming thus a rank unknown before,
Grand--caterer and dry-nurse of the church.

I venerate the man, whose heart is warm;
Whose hands are pure, whose doctrine and whose life
Coincident, exhibit lucid proof
That he is honest in the sacred cause.
To such I render more than mere respect,
Whose actions say that they respect themselves.
But loose in morals, and in manners vain,

In

In conversation frivolous, in dress
Extreme, at once rapacious and profuse,
Frequent in park, with lady at his side,
Ambling and prattling scandal as he goes,
But rare at home, and never at his books,
Or with his pen, save, when he scrawls a card ;
Constant at routs, familiar with a round
Of ladyships, a stranger to the poor ;
Ambitious of preferment for its gold,
And well prepar'd by ignorance and sloth,
By infidelity and love of world,
To make God's work a sinecure ; a slave
To his own pleasures and his patron's pride. —
From such apostles, oh, ye mitred heads,
Preserve the church ! and lay not careless hands
On sculls that cannot teach, and will not learn.

Would I describe a preacher, such as Paul,
Were he on earth, would hear, approve, and own,
Paul should himself direct me. I would trace

His master-strokes, and draw from his design.
I would express him simple, grave, sincere ;
In doctrine uncorrupt ; in language plain ;
And plain in manner. Decent, solemn, chaste,
And natural in gesture. Much impress'd
Himself, as conscious of his awful charge,
And anxious mainly that the flock he feeds
May feel it too. Affectionate in look,
And tender in address, as well becomes
A messenger of grace to guilty men.
Behold the picture !—Is it like ?—Like whom ?
The things that mount the rostrum with a skip,
And then skip down again ; pronounce a text,
Cry, hem ; and reading, what they never wrote,
Just fifteen minutes, huddle up their work,
And with a well-bred whisper close the scene.

In man or woman, but far most in man,
And most of all in man that ministers
And serves the altar, in my soul I loath

All

All affectation. 'Tis my perfect scorn ;
Object of my implacable disgust,
What !—will a man play tricks, will he indulge
A silly fond conceit of his fair form
And just proportion, fashionable mien,
And pretty face, in presence of his God ?
Or will he seek to dazzle me with tropes,
As with the di'mond on his lily hand,
And play his brilliant parts before my eyes
When I am hungry for the bread of life ?
He mocks his Maker, prostitutes and shames
His noble office, and, instead of truth,
Displaying his own beauty, starves his flock.
Therefore, avaunt ! all attitude and stare,
And start theatric, practis'd at the glass,
I seek divine simplicity in him
Who handles things divine ; and all beside,
Though learn'd with labor, and though much admir'd
By curious eyes and judgments ill-inform'd,
To me is odious as the nasal twang

Heard at conventicle, where worthy men,
Mised by custom, strain celestial themes
Through the prest nostril, spectacle-befrid.
Some, decent in demeanor while they preach,
That task perform'd, relapse into themselves,
And having spoken wisely, at the close
Grow wanton, and give proof to ev'ry eye—
Whoe'er was edified, themselves were not.
Forth comes the pocket mirror. First we stroke
An eye-brow ; next, compose a straggling lock ;
Then with an air, most gracefully perform'd,
Fall back into our seat, extend an arm,
And lay it at its ease with gentle care,
With handkerchief in hand, depending low.
The better hand more busy, gives the nose
Its bergamot, or aids th' indebted eye
With op'ra glafs to watch the moving scene,
And recognize the slow-retiring fair.
Now this is fulsome ; and offends me more
Than in a churchman slovenly neglect

And

And rustic coarseness would. An heav'nly mind
 May be indiff'rent to her house of clay,
 And slight the hovel as beneath her care ;
 But how a body so fantastic, trim,
 And quaint in its deportment and attire,
 Can lodge an heav'nly mind—demands a doubt.

He that negotiates between God and man,
 As God's ambassador, the grand concerns
 Of judgment and of mercy, should beware
 Of lightness in his speech. 'Tis pitiful
 To court a grin, when you should woo a soul ;
 To break a jest, when pity would inspire
 Pathetic exhortation ; and t' address
 The skittish fancy with facetious tales,
 When sent with God's commission to the heart.
 So did not Paul. Direct me to a quip
 Or merry turn in all he ever wrote,
 And I consent you take it for your text,
 Your only one, till fides and benches fail.

No: he was serious in a serious cause,
And understood too well the weighty terms
That he had ta'en in charge. He would not stoop
To conquer those by jocular exploits,
Whom truth and soberness assail'd in vain.

Oh, popular applause! what heart of man
Is proof against thy sweet seducing charms?
The wisest and the best feel urgent need
Of all their caution in thy gentlest gales;
But swell'd into a gust—who then, alas!
With all his canvass set, and inexpert,
And therefore heedless, can withstand thy power?
Praise from the rivell'd lips of toothless, bald
Decrepitude; and in the looks of lean
And craving poverty; and in the bow
Respectful of the smutch'd artificer,
Is oft too welcome, and may much disturb
The bias of the purpose. How much more
Pour'd forth by beauty splendid and polite,

In

In language soft as adoration breathes ?
 Ah spare your idol ! think him human still.
 Charms he may have, but he has frailties too,
 Doat not too much, nor spoil what ye admire.

All truth is from the sempiternal source
 Of light divine. But Egypt, Greece, and Rome,
 Drew from the stream below. More favor'd, we
 Drink, when we chuse it, at the fountain head.
 To them it flow'd much mingled and defil'd
 With hurtful error, prejudice, and dreams
 Illusive of philosophy, so call'd,
 But falsely. Sages after sages strove,
 In vain, to filter off a chrystal draught
 Pure from the lees, which often more enhanc'd
 The thirst than slak'd it, and not seldom bred
 Intoxication and delirium wild.
 In vain they push'd enquiry to the birth
 And spring-time of the world ; ask'd, whence is man ?
 Why form'd at all ? And wherefore as he is ?

Where must he find his Maker ? With what rites
Adore him ? Will he hear, accept, and bless ?

Or does he sit regardless of his works ?

Has man within him an immortal seed ?

Or does the tomb take all ? If he survive

His ashes, where ? and in what weal or woe ?

Knots worthy of solution, which alone

A Deity could solve. Their answers vague,

And all at random, fabulous and dark,

Left them as dark themselves. Their rules of life

Defective and unsanction'd, prov'd too weak

To bind the roving appetite, and lead

Blind nature to a God not yet reveal'd.

'Tis Revelation satisfies all doubts,

Explains all mysteries, except her own,

And so illuminates the path of life,

That fools discover it, and stray no more.

Now tell me, dignified and sapient sir,

My man of morals, nurtur'd in the shades

Of

Of Academus, is this false or true ?
Is Christ the abler teacher, or the schools ?
If Christ, then why resort at ev'ry turn
To Athens or to Rome, for wisdom short
Of man's occasions, when in him reside
Grace, knowledge, comfort, an unfathom'd store ?
How oft, when Paul has serv'd us with a text,
Has Epictetus, Plato, Tully preach'd !
Men that, if now alive, would fit content
And humble learners of a Saviour's worth,
Preach it who might. Such was their love of truth,
Their thirst of knowledge, and their candour too.

And thus it is. The pastor, either vain
By nature, or by flatt'ry made so, taught
To gaze at his own splendor, and t' exalt
Aburdly, not his office, but himself ;
Or unenlighten'd, and too proud to learn,
Or vicious, and not therefore apt to teach,
Perverting often by the strefs of lewd

And

And loose example, whom he should instruct,
Exposes and holds up to broad disgrace
The noblest function, and discredits much
The brightest truths that man has ever seen.
For ghostly counsel, if it either fall
Below the exigence, or be not back'd
With show of love, at least with hopeful proof
Of some sincerity on the giver's part ;
Or be dishonor'd in th' exterior form
And mode of its conveyance, by such tricks
As move derision, or by foppish airs
And histrionic mum'm'ry, that let down
The pulpit to the level of the stage,
Drops from the lips a disregarded thing.
The weak perhaps are moved, but are not taught,
While prejudice in men of stronger minds
Takes deeper root, confirm'd by what they see.
A relaxation of religion's hold
Upon the roving and untutor'd heart
Soon follows, and the curb of conscience snapt,

The

The laity run wild.—But do they now ?
Note their extravagance, and be convinc'd.

As nations, ignorant of God, contrive
A wooden one, so we, no longer taught
By monitors that mother church supplies,
Now make our own. Posterity will ask
(If e'er posterity see verse of mine)
Some fifty or an hundred lustrums hence,
What was a monitor in George's days ?
My very gentle reader, yet unborn,
Of whom I needs must augur better things,
Since heav'n would sure grow weary of a world
Productive only of a race like ours,
A monitor is wood. Plank shaven thin.
We wear it at our backs. There closely brac'd
And neatly fitted, it compresses hard
The prominent and most unsightly bones,
And binds the shoulders flat. We prove its use
Sov'reign and most effectual to secure

A form

A form not now gymnastic as of yore,
From rickets and distortion, else, our lot.
But thus admonish'd we can walk erect,
One proof at least of manhood; while the friend
Sticks close, a Mentor worthy of his charge.
Our habits costlier than Lucullus wore,
And by caprice as multiplied as his,
Just please us while the fashion is at full,
But change with ev'ry moon. The sycophant
Who waits to dress us, arbitrates their date,
Surveys his fair reversion with keen eye;
Finds one ill made, another obsolete,
This fits not nicely, that is ill conceiv'd,
And making prize of all that he condemns,
With our expenditure defrays his own.
Variety's the very spice of life,
That gives it all its flavor. We have run
Through ev'ry change that fancy at the loom
Exhausted, has had genius to supply,
And studious of mutation still, discard.

A real

A real elegance, a little used,
For monstrous novelty and strange disguise.
We sacrifice to dress, till household joys
And comforts cease. Dress drains our cellar dry,
And keeps our larder lean ; puts out our fires,
And introduces hunger, frost, and woe,
Where peace and hospitality might reign.
What man that lives, and that knows how to live,
Would fail t' exhibit at the public shows
A form as splendid as the proudest there,
Though appetite raise outcries at the cost ?
A man o' th' town dines late, but soon enough,
With reasonable forecast and dispatch,
T' insure a side-box station at half price.
You think, perhaps, so delicate his dress,
His daily fare as delicate. Alas !
He picks clean teeth, and, busy as he seems
With an old tavern quill, is hungry yet.
The rout is folly's circle, which she draws,
With magic wand. So potent is the spell,

That

That none, decoy'd into that fatal ring,
Unless by heaven's peculiar grace, escape.
There we grow early grey, but never wise,
There form connections, but acquire no friend ;
Solicit pleasure hopeless of success ;
Waste youth in occupations only fit
For second childhood, and devote old age
To sports which only childhood could excuse.
There they are happiest who dissemble best
Their weariness ; and they the most polite
Who squander time and treasure with a smile,
Though at their own destruction. She that asks
Her dear five hundred friends, contemns them all,
And hates their coming. They, what can they less ?
Make just reprisals, and with cringe and thrug,
And bow obsequious, hide their hate of her.
All catch the frenzy, downward from her Grace,
Whose flambeaux flash against the morning skies,
And gild our chamber ceilings as they pass,
To her who frugal only that her thrift

May feed excesses she can ill afford,
 Is hackney'd home unlacquey'd. Who in haste
 Alighting, turns the key in her own door,
 And at the watchman's lantern borrowing light,
 Finds a cold bed her only comfort left.
 Wives beggar husbands, husbands starve their wives,
 On fortune's velvet altar off'ring up
 Their last poor pittance. Fortune most severe
 Of goddesses yet known, and costlier far
 Than all that held their routs in Juno's heav'n—
 So fare we in this prison-house the world,
 And 'tis a fearful spectacle to see
 So many maniacs dancing in their chains.
 They gaze upon the links that hold them fast,
 With eyes of anguish, execrate their lot,
 Then shake them in despair, and dance again.

Now basket up the family of plagues
 That waste our vitals. Peculation, sale
 Of honor, perjury, corruption, frauds

By

By forgery, by subterfuge of law,
By tricks and lies as num'rous and as keen
As the necessities their authors feel ;
Then cast them closely bundled, ev'ry brat
At the right door. Profusion is the fire.
Profusion unrestrain'd, with all that's base
In character, has litter'd all the land,
And bred within the mem'ry of no few,
A priesthood such as Baal's was of old,
A people such as never was till now.
It is a hungry vice :—it eats up all
That gives society its beauty, strength,
Convenience, and security, and use :
Makes men mere vermin, worthy to be trapp'd
And gibbeted as fast as catchpole claws
Can seize the slipp'ry prey. Unties the knot
Of union, and converts the sacred band
That holds mankind together, to a scourge.
Profusion deluging a state with lusts
Of grossest nature and of worst effects,

Prepares it for its ruin. Hardens, blinds,
And warps the consciences of public men
Till they can laugh at virtue ; mock the fools
That trust them ; and, in th' end, disclose a face
That would have shock'd credulity herself
Unmask'd, vouchsafing this their sole excuse ;
Since all alike are selfish—why not they ?
This does Profusion, and th' accursed cause
Of such deep mischief, has itself a cause.

In colleges and halls, in ancient days,
When learning, virtue, piety and truth
Were precious, and inculcated with care,
There dwelt a sage call'd Discipline. His head
Not yet by time completely silver'd o'er,
Bespoke him past the bounds of freakish youth,
But strong for service still, and unimpair'd.
His eye was meek and gentle, and a smile
Play'd on his lips, and in his speech was heard
Paternal sweetness, dignity, and love.

The occupation dearest to his heart
Was to encourage goodness. He would stroke
The head of modest and ingenuous worth
That blush'd at its own praise ; and press the youth
Close to his side that pleas'd him. Learning grew
Beneath his care, a thriving vig'rous plant ;
The mind was well inform'd, the passions held
Subordinate, and diligence was choice.
If e'er it chanc'd, as sometimes chance it must,
That one among so many overleap'd
The limits of controul, his gentle eye
Grew stern, and darted a severe rebuke ;
His frown was full of terror, and his voice
Shook the delinquent with such fits of awe
As left him not, till penitence had won
Lost favor back again, and clos'd the breach.
But Discipline, a faithful servant long,
Declin'd at length into the vale of years ;
A palsy struck his arm, his sparkling eye
Was quench'd in rheums of age, his voice unstrung
Grew

Grew tremulous, and mov'd derision more
Than rev'rence, in perverse rebellious youth.
So colleges and halls neglected much
Their good old friend, and Discipline at length
O'erlook'd and unemploy'd, fell sick and died.
Then study languish'd, emulation slept,
And virtue fled. The schools became a scene
Of solemn farce, where ignorance in stilts,
His cap well lin'd with logic not his own,
With parrot tongue perform'd the scholar's part,
Proceeding soon a graduated dunce.
Then compromise had place, and scrutiny
Became stone-blind, precedence went in truck,
And he was competent whose purse was so.
A dissolution of all bonds ensu'd,
The curbs invented for the mulish mouth
Of head-strong youth were broken; bars and bolts
Grew rusty by disuse, and massy gates
Forgot their office, op'ning with a touch;
'Till gowns at length are found mere masquerade;

The taffell'd cap and the spruce band a jeft,
A mock'ry of the world. What need of these
For gamesters, jockies, brothellers impure,
Spendthrifts and booted sportsmen, oft'ner seen
With belted waist and pointers at their heels,
Than in the bounds of duty? What was learn'd,
If aught was learn'd in childhood, is forgot,
And such expence as pinches parents blue,
And mortifies the lib'ral hand of love,
Is squander'd in pursuit of idle sports
And vicious pleasures: buys the boy a name,
That sits a stigma on his father's house,
And cleaves through life inseparably close
To him that wears it. What can after-games
Of riper joys, and commerce with the world,
The lewd vain world that must receive him soon,
Add to such erudition thus acquir'd,
Where science and where virtue are profess'd?
They may confirm his habits, rivet fast
His folly, but to spoil him is a task

That

That bids defiance to th' united pow'rs
 Of fashion, dissipation, taverns, stews.
 Now, blame we most the nurslings or the nurse ?
 The children crook'd, and twist'd, and deform'd
 Through want of care, or her whose winking eye
 And slumb'ring oscitancy mars the brood ?
 The nurse no doubt. Regardless of her charge,
 She needs herself correction : needs to learn
 That it is dang'rous sporting with the world,
 With things so sacred as a nation's trust,
 The nurture of her youth, her dearest pledge,

All are not such. I had a brother once—
 Peace to the mem'ry of a man of worth,
 A man of letters, and of manners too.
 Of manners sweet as virtue always wears,
 When gay good-nature dresses her in smiles,
 He grac'd a college *, in which order yet

* Ben'et Coll. Cambridge.

Was sacred ; and was honor'd, lov'd and wept
By more than one, themselves conspicuous there.
Some minds are temper'd happily, and mixt
With such ingredients of good sense and taste
Of what is excellent in man, they thirst
With such a zeal to be what they approve,
That no restraints can circumscribe them more,
Than they themselves by choice, for wisdom's sake,
Nor can example hurt them. What they see
Of vice in others but enhancing more
The charms of virtue in their just esteem.
If such escape contagion, and emerge
Pure, from so foul a pool, to shine abroad,
And give the world their talents and themselves,
Small thanks to those whose negligence or sloth
Expos'd their inexperience to the snare,
And left them to an undirected choice.

See then ! the quiver broken and decay'd,
In which are kept our arrows. Rusting there

In

In wild disorder, and unfit for use,
What wonder, if discharg'd into the world,
They shame their shooters with a random flight,
Their points obtruse, and feathers drunk with wine.
Well may the church wage unsuccessful war,
With such artill'ry arm'd. Vice parries wide
Th' undreaded volley with a sword of straw,
And stands an impudent and fearless mark.

Have we not track'd the felon home, and found
His birth-place and his dam? The country mourns,
Mourns, because ev'ry plague that can infect
Society, and that saps and worms the base
Of th' edifice that policy has rais'd,
Swarms in all quarters; meets the eye, the ear,
And suffocates the breath at ev'ry turn.
Profusion breeds them; and the cause itself
Of that calamitous mischief has been found:
Found too where most offensive, in the skirts
Of the rob'd pedagogue. Else, let th' arraign'd

Stand up unconscious, and refute the charge.

So when the Jewish Leader stretch'd his arm,

And wav'd his rod divine, a race obscene,

Spawn'd in the muddy beds of Nile, came forth,

Polluting Ægypt. Gardens, fields, and plains

Were cover'd with the pest. The streets were fill'd ;

The croaking nuisance lurk'd in ev'ry nook,

Nor palaces nor even chambers 'scap'd,

And the land stank, so num'rous was the fry.

THE
T A S K.

BOOK III.

ARGUMENT of the THIRD BOOK.

Self-recollection and reproof.—Address to domestic happiness.—Some account of myself.—The vanity of many of their pursuits who are reputed wise.—Justification of my censures.—Divine illumination necessary to the most expert philosopher.—The question, What is truth? answered by other questions.—Domestic happiness addressed again.—Few lovers of the country.—My tame hare.—Occupations of a retired gentleman in his garden.—Pruning.—Framing.—Greenhouse.—Sowing of flower-seeds.—The country preferable to the town even in the winter.—Reasons why it is deserted at that season.—Ruinous effects of gaming and of expensive improvement.—Book concludes with an apostrophe to the metropolis.

T H E
T A S K.

B O O K III.

T H E G A R D E N.

As one who, long in thickets and in brakes
Entangled, winds now this way and now that
His devious course uncertain, seeking home ;
Or having long in miry ways been foil'd
And fore discomfited, from slough to slough
Plunging, and half despairing of escape,
If chance at length he find a green-sward smooth
And faithful to the foot, his spirits rise,
He chirrup brisk his ear-erecting steed,
And winds his way with pleasure and with ease ;
So I, designing other themes, and call'd

T' adorn

T' adorn the Sofa with eulogium due,
To tell its slumbers and to paint its dreams,
Have rambled wide. In country, city, seat
Of academic fame (howe'er deserv'd)
Long held, and scarcely disengag'd at last.
But now with pleasant pace, a cleaner road
I mean to tread. I feel myself at large,
Courageous, and refresh'd for future toil,
If toil await me, or if dangers new.

Since pulpits fail, and sounding-boards reflect
Most part an empty ineffectual sound,
What chance that I, to fame so little known,
Nor conversant with men or manners much,
Should speak to purpose, or with better hope
Crack the satiric thong? 'twere wiser far
For me, enamour'd of sequester'd scenes,
And charm'd with rural beauty, to repose
Where chance may throw me, beneath elm or vine,
My languid limbs when summer fears the plains,

Or

Or when rough winter rages, on the soft
And shelter'd Sofa, while the nitrous air
Feeds a blue flame, and makes a chearful hearth ;
There, undisturb'd by folly, and appriz'd
How great the danger of disturbing her,
To muse in silence, or at least confine
Remarks that gall so many, to the few
My partners in retreat. Disgust conceal'd
Is oft-times proof of wisdom, when the fault
Is obstinate, and cure beyond our reach.

Domestic happiness, thou only bliss
Of Paradise that has surviv'd the fall !
Though few now taste thee unimpair'd and pure,
Or tasting, long enjoy thee, too infirm
Or too incautious to preserve thy sweets
Unmixt with drops of bitter, which neglect
Or temper sheds into thy chrystal cup.
Thou art the nurse of virtue. In thine arms
She smiles, appearing, as in truth she is,

Heav'n-

Heav'n-born, and destin'd to the skies again.
Thou art not known where pleasure is ador'd,
That reeling goddess with the zoneless waist
And wand'ring eyes, still leaning on the arm
Of novelty, her fickle frail support;
For thou art meek and constant, hating change,
And finding in the calm of truth-tried love
Joys that her stormy raptures never yield.
Forfaking thee, what shipwreck have we made
Of honor, dignity, and fair renown;
Till prostitution elbows us aside
In all our crowded streets, and senates seem
Conven'd for purposes of empire less,
Than to release th' adultress from her bond.
Th' adultress! what a theme for angry verse,
What provocation to th' indignant heart
That feels for injur'd love! but I disdain
The nauseous task to paint her as she is,
Cruel, abandon'd, glorying in her shame.
No. Let her pass, and chariotted along

In guilty splendor, shake the public ways ;
The frequency of crimes has wash'd them white.
And verse of mine shall never brand the wretch,
Whom matrons now of character unsmirch'd,
And chaste themselves, are not ashamed to own.
Virtue and vice had bound'ries in old time,
Not to be pass'd. And she that had renounc'd
Her sex's honor, was renounc'd herself
By all that priz'd it ; not for prud'ry's sake,
But dignity's, resentful of the wrong.
'Twas hard perhaps on here and there a waif,
Desirous to return, and not receiv'd,
But was an wholesome rigor in the main,
And taught th' unblemish'd to preserve with care
That purity, whose loss was loss of all.
Men too were nice in honor in those days,
And judg'd offenders well. And he that sharp'd,
And pocketted a prize by fraud obtain'd,
Was mark'd and shunn'd as odious. He that sold
His country, or was slack when she requir'd

His ev'ry nerve in action and at stretch,
Paid with the blood that he had basely spar'd
The price of his default. But now, yes, now,
We are become so candid and so fair,
So lib'ral in construction, and so rich
In christian charity, a good-natur'd age !
That they are safe, sinners of either sex,
Transgress what laws they may. Well dress'd, well bred,
Well equipag'd, is ticket good enough
To pass us readily through ev'ry door.
Hypocrisy, detest her as we may,
(And no man's hatred ever wrong'd her yet)
May claim this merit still, that she admits
The worth of what she mimics with such care,
And thus gives virtue indirect applause ;
But she has burnt her mask, not needed here,
Where vice has such allowance, that her shifts
And specious semblances have lost their use.

I was a stricken deer that left the herd
Long since ; with many an arrow deep infixt,

My

My panting side was charg'd, when I withdrew
To seek a tranquil death in distant shades.
There was I found by one who had himself
Been hurt by th' archers. In his side he bore,
And in his hands and feet, the cruel scars.
With gentle force solisiting the darts,
He drew them forth, and heal'd and bade me live.
Since then, with few associates, in remote
And silent woods I wander, far from those
My former partners of the peopled scene;
With few associates, and not wishing more.
Here much I ruminate, as much I may,
With other views of men and manners now
Than once, and others of a life to come.
I see that all are wand'ers, gone astray
Each in his own delusions; they are lost
In chace of fancy'd happiness, still woo'd
And never won. Dream after dream ensues,
And still they dream that they shall still succeed,
And still are disappointed; rings the world

With the vain fir. I sum up half mankind,
And add two-thirds of the remaining half,
And find the total of their hopes and fears
Dreams, empty dreams. The million flit as gay
As if created only like the fly,
That spreads his motley wings in th' eye of noon,
To sport their season, and be seen no more.
The rest are sober dreamers, grave and wise,
And pregnant with discov'ries new and rare.
Some write a narrative of wars, and feats
Of heroes little known, and call the rant
An history: describe the man, of whom
His own coevals took but little note,
And paint his person, character, and views,
As they had known him from his mother's womb.
They disentangle from the puzzled skein,
In which obscurity has wrapp'd them up,
The threads of politic and shrew'd design,
That ran through all his purposes, and charge
His mind with meanings that he never had,

Or

Or having, kept conceal'd. Some drill and bore
The solid earth, and from the strata there
Extract a register, by which we learn
That he who made it, and reveal'd its date
To Moses, was mistaken in its age.
Some more acute, and more industrious still,
Contrive creation; travel nature up
To the sharp peak of her sublimest height,
And tell us whence the stars; why some are fix'd,
And planetary some; what gave them first
Rotation, from what fountain flow'd their light.
Great contest follows, and much learned dust
Involves the combatants, each claiming truth,
And truth disclaiming both: and thus they spend
The little wick of life's poor shallow lamp,
In playing tricks with nature, giving laws
To distant worlds, and trifling in their own.
Is't not a pity now, that tickling rheums
Should ever tease the lungs and blear the sight
Of oracles like these? Great pity too,

That having wielded th' elements, and built
A thousand systems, each in his own way,
They should go out in fume and be forgot?
Ah! what is life thus spent? and what are they
But frantic who thus spend it? all for smoke—
Eternity for bubbles, proves at last
A senseless bargain. When I see such games
Play'd by the creatures of a pow'r who swears
That he will judge the earth, and call the fool
To a sharp reck'ning that has liv'd in vain;
And when I weigh this seeming wisdom well,
And prove it in th' infallible result
So hollow and so false—I feel my heart
Dissolve in pity, and account the learn'd,
If this be learning, most of all deceiv'd.
Great crimes alarm the conscience, but it sleeps
While thoughtful man is plausibly amus'd.
Defend me therefore, common sense, say I,
From reveries so airy, from the toil

of

Of dropping buckets into empty wells,
And growing old in drawing nothing up !

'Twere well, says one sage erudite, profound,
Terribly arch'd and aquiline his nose,
And overbuilt with most impending brows ;
'Twere well, could you permit the world to live
As the world pleases. What's the world to you ?
Much. I was born of woman, and drew milk,
As sweet as charity, from human breasts.
I think, articulate, I laugh and weep,
And exercise all functions of a man.
How then should I and any man that lives
Be strangers to each other ? Pierce my vein,
Take of the crimson stream meand'ring there,
And catechise it well ; apply your glass,
Search it, and prove now if it be not blood
Congenial with thine own : and if it be,
What edge of subtlety canst thou suppose
Keen enough, wise and skilful as thou art,

To cut the link of brotherhood, by which
One common Maker bound me to the kind,
True ; I am no proficient, I confess,
In arts like yours. I cannot call the swift
And perilous lightnings from the angry clouds,
And bid them hide themselves in earth beneath ;
I cannot analyse the air, nor catch
The parallax of yonder luminous point
That seems half quench'd in the immense abyss ;
Such pow'rs I boast not—neither can I rest
A silent witness of the headlong rage
Or heedless folly by which thousands die,
Bone of my bone, and kindred souls to mine.

God never meant that man should scale the heav'ns
By strides of human wisdom. In his works,
Though wond'rous, he commands us in his word
To seek him rather, where his mercy shines.
The mind indeed, enlighten'd from above,
Views him in all : ascribes to the grand cause

The

The grand effect : acknowledges with joy
His manner, and with rapture tastes his style.
But never yet did philosophic tube,
That brings the planets home into the eye
Of observation; and discovers, else
Not visible, his family of worlds,
Discover him that rules them; such a veil
Hangs over mortal eyes, blind from the birth,
And dark in things divine. Full often too
Our wayward intellect, the more we learn
Of nature, overlooks her author more,
From instrumental causes proud to draw
Conclusions retrograde, and mad mistake.
But if his word once teach us, shoot a ray
Through all the heart's dark chambers, and reveal
Truths undiscern'd, but by that holy light,
Then all is plain. Philosophy baptiz'd
In the pure fountain of eternal love
Has eyes indeed; and viewing all she sees,
As meant to indicate a God to man,

Gives *him* his praise, and forfeits not her own.
Learning has borne such fruit in other days
On all her branches : piety has found
Friends in the friends of science, and true pray'r
Has flow'd from lips wet with Castalian dews.
Such was thy wisdom, Newton, childlike sage !
Sagacious reader of the works of God,
And in his word sagacious. Such too thine,
Milton, whose genius had angelic wings,
And fed on manna. And such thine, in whom
Our British Themis gloried with just cause,
Immortal Hale ! for deep discernment prais'd,
And sound integrity not more, than fam'd
For sanctity of manners undefil'd.

All flesh is grass, and all its glory fades
Like the fair flow'r dishevell'd in the wind ;
Riches have wings, and grandeur is a dream :
The man we celebrate must find a tomb,
And we that worship him, ignoble graves.

Nothing

Nothing is proof against the general curse
Of vanity, that seizes all below.

The only amaranthine flow'r on earth
Is virtue ; th' only lasting treasure, truth.
But what is truth ? 'twas Pilate's question put
To Truth itself, that deign'd him no reply.
And wherefore ? will not God impart his light
To them that ask it ?—Freely—'tis his joy,
His glory, and his nature to impart,

But to the proud, uncandid, insincere,
Or negligent enquirer, not a spark.

What's that which brings contempt upon a book,
And him who writes it, though the style be neat,
The method clear, and argument exact ?
That makes a minister in holy things

The joy of many, and the dread of more,
His name a theme for praise and for reproach ?—

That while it gives us worth in God's account,
Depreciates and undoes us in our own ?

What pearl is it that rich men cannot buy,

That

That learning is too proud to gather up,
But which the poor, and the despis'd of all,
Seek and obtain, and often find unfought ?
Tell me, and I will tell thee, what is truth.

O friendly to the best pursuits of man,
Friendly to thought, to virtue, and to peace,
Domestic life in rural leisure pass'd !
Few know thy value, and few taste thy sweets,
Though many boast thy favours, and affect
To understand and chuse thee for their own.
But foolish man foregoes his proper bliss,
Ev'n as his first progenitor, and quits,
Though placed in paradise (for earth has still
Some traces of her youthful beauty left)
Substantial happiness for transient joy.
Scenes form'd for contemplation, and to nurse
The growing seeds of wisdom ; that suggest,
By ev'ry pleasing image they present,
Reflections such as meliorate the heart,

Compose

Compose the passions, and exalt the mind ;
Scenes such as these, 'tis his supreme delight
To fill with riot, and defile with blood.
Should some contagion, kind to the poor brutes
We persecute, annihilate the tribes
That draw the sportsman over hill and dale
Fearless, and rapt away from all his cares ;
Should never game-fowl hatch her eggs again,
Nor baited hook deceive the fishes eye ;
Could pageantry and dance, and feast and song,
Be quell'd in all our summer-months retreat ;
How many self-deluded nymphs and swains,
Who dream they have a taste for fields and groves,
Would find them hideous nurs'ries of the spleen,
And crowd the roads, impatient for the town !
They love the country, and none else, who seek
For their own sake its silence and its shade.
Delights which who would leave, that has a heart
Susceptible of pity, or a mind
Cultur'd and capable of sober thought,

For

For all the savage din of the swift pack,
And clamours of the field ? detested sport,
That owes its pleasures to another's pain,
That feeds upon the sobs and dying shrieks
Of harmless nature, dumb, but yet endu'd
With eloquence that agonies inspire
Of silent tears and heart-distending sighs ?
Vain tears, alas ! and sighs that never find
A corresponding tone in joyal souls.
Well—one at least is safe. One shelter'd hare
Has never heard the sanguinary yell
Of cruel man, exulting in her woes.
Innocent partner of my peaceful home,
Whom ten long years experience of my care
Has made at last familiar ; she has lost
Much of her vigilant instinctive dread,
Not needful here, beneath a roof like mine.
Yes—thou may'st eat thy bread, and lick the hand
That feeds thee ; thou may'st frolic on the floor
At evening, and at night retire secure

To thy straw couch, and slumber unalarm'd ;
 For I have gain'd thy confidence, have pledg'd
 All that is human in me, to protect
 Thine unsuspecting gratitude and love.
 If I survive thee I will dig thy grave,
 And when I place thee in it, sighing say,
 I knew at least one hare that had a friend.

How various his employments, whom the world
 Calls idle, and who justly, in return,
 Esteems that busy world an idler too !
 Friends, books, a garden, and perhaps his pen,
 Delightful industry enjoy'd at home,
 And nature in her cultivated trim
 Dress'd to his taste, inviting him abroad—
 Can he want occupation who has these ?
 Will he be idle who has much t' enjoy ?
 Me, therefore, studious of laborious ease,
 Not slothful ; happy to deceive the time,
 Not waste it ; and aware that human life

Is but a loan to be repaid with use,
When He shall call his debtors to account,
From whom are all our blessings, bus'ness finds
Ev'n here : while sedulous I seek t' improve,
At least neglect not, or leave unemploy'd,
The mind he gave me ; driving it, though slack
Too oft, and much impeded in its work
By causes not to be divulg'd in vain,
To its just point, the service of mankind.
He that attends to his interior self,
That has a heart and keeps it ; has a mind
That hungers and supplies it ; and, who seeks
A social, not a dissipated life,
Has business ; feels himself engag'd t' achieve
No unimportant, though a silent task.
A life all turbulence and noise, may seem,
To him that leads it, wise and to be prais'd ;
But wisdom is a pearl with most success
Sought in still water, and beneath clear skies.
He that is ever occupied in storms,

Or

Or dives not for it, or brings up instead,
Vainly industrious, a disgraceful prize.

The morning finds the self-sequester'd man
Fresh for his task, intend what task he may.
Whether inclement seasons recommend
His warm but simple home, where he enjoys,
With her who shares his pleasures and his heart,
Sweet converse, sipping calm the fragrant lymph
Which neatly she prepares ; then to his book
Well chosen, and not fullenly perus'd
In selfish silence, but imparted oft
As aught occurs that she may smile to hear,
Or turn to nourishment, digested well.
Or if the garden with its many cares,
All well repay'd, demand him, he attends
The welcome call, conscious how much the hand
Of lubbard labor needs his watchful eye,
Oft loit'ring lazily, if not o'erseen,
Or misapplying his unskilful strength.

Nor does he govern only or direct,
But much performs himself. No works indeed
That ask robust tough sinews bred to toil,
Servile employ—but such as may amuse,
Not tire, demanding rather skill than force.
Proud of his well-spread walls, he views his trees
That meet (no barren interval between)
With pleasure more than ev'n their fruits afford,
Which, save himself who trains them, none can feel:
These therefore are his own peculiar charge,
No meaner hand may discipline the shoots,
None but his steel approach them. What is weak,
Distemper'd, or has lost prolific pow'rs,
Impair'd by age, his unrelenting hand
Dooms to the knife: nor does he spare the soft
And succulent that feeds its giant growth,
But barren, at th' expence of neighb'ring twigs
Less ostentatious, and yet studded thick
With hopeful gems. The rest, no portion left
That may disgrace his art, or disappoint

Large

Large expectation, he disposes neat
At measur'd distances, that air and sun,
Admitted freely, may afford their aid,
And ventilate and warm the swelling buds.
Hence summer has her riches, autumn hence,
And hence ev'n winter fills his wither'd hand
With blushing fruits, and plenty not his own *.
Fair recompense of labour well bestow'd,
And wise precaution, which a clime so rude
Makes needful still, whose spring is but the child
Of churlish winter, in her froward moods
Discov'ring much the temper of her fire.
For oft, as if in her the stream of mild
Maternal nature had revers'd its course,
She brings her infants forth with many smiles,
But once deliver'd, kills them with a frown.
He therefore, timely warn'd, himself supplies
Her want of care, screening and keeping warm
The plenteous bloom, that no rough blast may sweep

* *Miraturque novos fructus et non sua poma.*

VIRG.

His garlands from the boughs. Again, as oft
As the sun peeps and vernal airs breathe mild,
The fence withdrawn, he gives them ev'ry beam,
And spreads his hopes before the blaze of day.

To raise the prickly and green-coated gourd,
So grateful to the palate, and when rare
So coveted, else base and disesteem'd—
Food for the vulgar merely—is an art
That toiling ages have but just matur'd,
And at this moment unassay'd in song.
Yet gnats have had, and frogs and mice, long since,
Their eulogy; those sang the Mantuan bard,
And these the Grecian, in ennobling strains;
And in thy numbers, Phillips, shines for aye
The solitary shilling. Pardon'then,
Ye sage dispensers of poetic fame!
Th' ambition of one meaner far, whose powers,
Presuming an attempt not less sublime,
Pant for the praise of dressing to the taste

Of

Of critic appetite, no sordid fare,
A cucumber, while costly yet and scarce.

The stable yields a stercoraceous heap,
Impregnated with quick fermenting salts,
And potent to resist the freezing blast :
For ere the beech and elm have cast their leaf
Deciduous, when now November dark
Checks vegetation in the torpid plant
Expos'd to his cold breath, the task begins.
Warily therefore, and with prudent heed,
He seeks a favor'd spot ; that where he builds
Th' agglomerated pile, his frame may front
The sun's meridian disk, and at the back
Enjoy close shelter, wall, or reeds, or hedge
Impervious to the wind. First he bids spread
Dry fern or litter'd hay, that may imbibe
Th' ascending damps ; then leisurely impose,
And lightly, shaking it with agile hand
From the full fork, the saturated straw.

What longest binds the closest, forms secure
The shapely side, that as it rises takes,
By just degrees, an overhanging breadth,
Shelt'ring the base with its projected eaves,
Th' uplifted frame, compact at ev'ry joint,
And overlaid with clear translucent glass,
He settles next upon the sloping mount,
Whose sharp declivity shoots off secure
From the dash'd pane the deluge as it falls.
He shuts it close, and the first labor ends.
Thrice must the voluble and restless earth
Spin round upon her axle, ere the warmth,
Slow gathering in the midst, through the square mass
Diffus'd, attain the surface : when, behold !
A pestilent and most corrosive steam,
Like a gross fog Boeotian, rising fast,
And fast condens'd upon the dewy fash,
Asks egress ; which obtain'd, the overcharg'd
And drench'd conservatory breathes abroad,
In volumes wheeling slow, the vapor dank,

And purified, rejoices to have lost
Its foul inhabitant. But to assuage
Th' impatient fervor which it first conceives
Within its reeking bosom, threat'ning death
To his young hopes, requires discreet delay.
Experience, slow preceptress, teaching oft
The way to glory by miscarriage foul,
Must prompt him, and admonish how to catch
Th' auspicious moment, when the temper'd heat,
Friendly to vital motion, may afford
Soft fomentation, and invite the seed.
The seed, selected wisely, plump, and smooth,
And glossy, he commits to pots of size
Diminutive, well fill'd with well-prepar'd
And fruitful soil, that has been treasur'd long,
And drank no moisture from the dripping clouds :
These, on the warm and genial earth that hides
The smoking manure, and o'er spreads it all,
He places lightly, and as time subdues
The rage of fermentation, plunges deep

In the soft medium, till they stand immers'd.
Then rise the tender germs, upstarting quick,
And spreading wide their spongy lobes, at first
Pale, wan, and livid, but assuming soon,
If fann'd by balmy and nutritious air,
Strain'd through the friendly mats, a vivid green.
Two leaves produc'd, two rough indented leaves,
Cautious, he pinches from the second stalk
A pimple, that portends a future sprout,
And interdicts its growth. Thence straight succeed
The branches, sturdy to his utmost wish,
Prolific all, and harbingers of more.
The crowded roots demand enlargement now,
And transplantation in an ampler space.
Indulg'd in what they wish, they soon supply
Large foliage, overshadowing golden flowers,
Blown on the summit of th' apparent fruit.
These have their sexes, and when summer shines
The bee transports the fertilizing meal
From flow'r to flow'r, and ev'n the breathing air

Wafts the rich prize to its appointed use.
Not so when winter scowls. Assistant art
Then acts in nature's office, brings to pass
The glad espousals, and insures the crop.

Grudge not, ye rich, (since luxury must have
His dainties, and the world's more num'rous half
Lives by contriving delicates for you)
Grudge not the cost. Ye little know the cares,
The vigilance, the labor, and the skill,
That day and night are exercis'd, and hang
Upon the ticklish balance of suspense,
That ye may garnish your profuse regales
With summer fruits brought forth by wintry funs.
Ten thousand dangers lie in wait to thwart
The process. Heat and cold, and wind and steam,
Moisture and drought, mice, worms, and swarming flies,
Minute as dust and numberless, oft work
Dire disappointment that admits no cure,
And which no care can obviate. It were long,

Too long, to tell th' expedients and the shifts
Which he that fights a season so severe
Devises, while he guards his tender trust,
And oft, at last, in vain. The learn'd and wise
Sarcastic would exclaim, and judge the song
Cold as its theme, and, like its theme, the fruit
Of too much labor, worthless when produc'd,

Who loves a garden, loves a green-house too,
Unconscious of a less propitious clime,
There blooms exotic beauty, warm and snug,
While the winds whistle and the snows descend.
The spiry myrtle with unwith'ring leaf
Shines there and flourishes. The golden boast
Of Portugal and western India there,
The ruddier orange and the paler lime,
Peep through their polish'd foliage at the storm,
And seem to smile at what they need not fear.
Th' amomum there with intermingling flow'rs
And cherries hangs her twigs, Geranium boasts

Her

Her crimson honors, and the spangled beau,
Ficoides, glitters bright the winter long.
All plants, of ev'ry leaf, that can endure
The winter's frown, if screen'd from his shrewd bite,
Live there and prosper. Those Aufonia claims,
Levantine regions these; th' Azores send
Their jessamine, her jessamine remote
Caffraia; foreigners from many lands,
They form one social shade, as if conven'd
By magic summons of th' Orphean lyre.
Yet just arrangement, rarely brought to pass
But by a master's hand, disposing well
The gay diversities of leaf and flow'r,
Must lend its aid to illustrate all their charms,
And dress the regular yet various scene.
Plant behind plant aspiring, in the van
The dwarfish, in the rear retir'd, but still
Sublime above the rest, the statelier stand.
So once were rang'd the sons of ancient Rome,
A noble show! while Roscius trod the stage;
And so, while Garrick, as renown'd as he,

The

The fons of Albion ; fearing each to lose
Some note of Nature's music from his lips,
And covetous of Shakespeare's beauty, seen
In ev'ry flash of his far-beaming eye.
Nor taste alone and well-contriv'd display
Suffice to give the marshall'd ranks the grace
Of their complete effect. Much yet remains
Unfung, and many cares are yet behind,
And more laborious ; cares on which depend
Their vigor, injur'd soon, not soon restor'd.
The foil must be renew'd, which, often wash'd,
Loses its treasure of salubrious salts,
And disappoints the roots ; the slender roots
Close interwoven, where they meet the vase
Must smooth be shorn away ; the sapless branch
Must fly before the knife ; the wither'd leaf
Must be detach'd, and where it strews the floor
Swept with a woman's neatness, breeding else
Contagion, and disseminating death.
Discharge but these kind offices, (and who

Would

Would spare, that loves them, offices like these?)
Well they reward the toil. The fight is pleas'd,
The scent regal'd, each odorif'rous leaf,
Each opening blossom, freely breathes abroad
Its gratitude, and thanks him with its sweets.

So manifold, all pleasing in their kind,
All healthful, are th' employs of rural life,
Reiterated as the wheel of time
Runs round, still ending, and beginning still.
Nor are these all. To deck the shapely knoll,
That softly swell'd and gaily dress'd, appears
A flow'ry island, from the dark green lawn
Emerging, must be deem'd a labor due
To no mean hand, and asks the touch of taste.
Here also grateful mixture of well-match'd
And fort'd hues, (each giving each relief,
And by contrasted beauty shining more)
Is needful. Strength may wield the pond'rous spade,
May turn the clod, and wheel the compost home,
But

But elegance, chief grace the garden shows,
And most attractive, is the fair result
Of thought, the creature of a polish'd mind.
Without it, all is Gothic as the scene
To which th' insipid citizen resorts
Near yonder heath ; where industry mispent,
But proud of his uncouth ill-chosen task,
Has made a heav'n on earth ; with funs and moons
Of close-ramm'd stones has charg'd th' incumber'd soil,
And fairly laid the Zodiac in the dust.
He therefore who would see his flow'rs dispos'd
Sightly and in just order, ere he gives
The beds the trusted treasure of their seeds,
Forecasts the future whole ; that when the scene
Shall break into its preconceiv'd display,
Each for itself, and all as with one voice
Conspiring, may attest his bright design,
Nor even then, dismissing as perform'd
His pleasant work, may he suppose it done,
Few self-supported flow'rs endure the wind

Uninjur'd,

Uninjur'd, but expect th' upholding aid
Of the smooth-shaven prop, and neatly tied,
Are wedded thus like beauty to old age,
For int'rest sake, the living to the dead.
Some cloath the foil that feeds them, far diffus'd
And lowly creeping, modest and yet fair,
Like virtue, thriving most where little seen.
Some, more aspiring, catch the neighbour shrub
With clasping tendrils, and invest his branch,
Else unadorn'd, with many a gay festoon
And fragrant chaplet, recompensing well
The strength they borrow with the grace they lend.
All hate the rank society of weeds,
Noisome, and ever greedy to exhaust
Th' impoverish'd earth; an overbearing race,
That like the multitude, made faction-mad,
Disturb good order, and degrade true worth.

Oh blest seclusion from a jarring world,
Which he, thus occupied, enjoys ! Retreat

Cannot

Cannot indeed to guilty man restore
Lost innocence, or cancel follies past,
But it has peace, and much secures the mind
From all assaults of evil, proving still
A faithful barrier, not o'erleap'd with ease
By vicious custom, raging uncontroul'd
Abroad, and desolating public life.
When fierce temptation, seconded within
By traitor appetite, and arm'd with darts
Temper'd in hell, invades the throbbing breast,
To combat may be glorious, and success
Perhaps may crown us, but to fly is safe.
Had I the choice of sublunary good,
What could I wish, that I possess not here?
Health, leisure, means to improve it, friendship, peace,
No loose or wanton, though a wand'ring muse,
And constant occupation without care.
Thus blest, I draw a picture of that bliss;
Hopeless indeed that dissipated minds,
And profligate abusers of a world

Created fair so much in vain for them,
Should seek the guiltless joys that I describe,
Allur'd by my report : but sure no less,
That, self-condemn'd, they must neglect the prize,
And what they will not taste, must yet approve.
What we admire we praise ; and when we praise,
Advance it into notice, that its worth
Acknowldg'd, others may admire it too.
I therefore recommend, though at the risk
Of popular disgust, yet boldly still,
The cause of piety and sacred truth,
And virtue, and those scenes which God ordain'd
Should best secure them and promote them most ;
Scenes that I love, and with regret perceive
Forfaken, or through folly not enjoy'd.
Pure is the nymph, though lib'ral of her smiles,
And chaste, though unconfin'd, whom I extol.
Not as the prince in Shushan, when he call'd,
Vain-glorious of her charms, his Vashti forth
To grace the full pavilion. His design

Was

Was but to boast his own peculiar good,
Which all might view with envy, none partake.
My charmer is not mine alone; my sweets,
And she that sweetens all my bitters too,
Nature, enchanting Nature, in whose form
And lineaments divine I trace a hand
That errs not, and find raptures still renew'd,
Is free to all men, universal prize.
Strange that so fair a creature should yet want
Admirers, and be destin'd to divide
With meaner objects, ev'n the few she finds!
Stripp'd of her ornaments, her leaves and flow'rs,
She loses all her influence. Cities then
Attract us, and neglected Nature pines,
Abandon'd, as unworthy of our love.
But are not wholesome airs, though unperfum'd
By roses; and clear suns, though scarcely felt,
And groves, if unharmonious, yet secure
From clamour, and whose very silence charms,
To be preferr'd to smoke, to the eclipse

That

That Metropolitan volcanos make,
Whose Stygian throats breathe darkness all day long;
And to the stir of commerce, driving flow,
And thund'ring loud, with his ten thousand wheels ?
They would be, were not madness in the head,
And folly in the heart ; were England now
What England was, plain, hospitable, kind,
And undebauch'd. But we have bid farewell
To all the virtues of those better days,
And all their honest pleasures. Mansions once
Knew their own masters, and laborious hinds,
Who had surviv'd the father, serv'd the son.
Now the legitimate and rightful Lord
Is but a transient guest, newly arriv'd,
And soon to be supplanted. He that saw
His patrimonial timber cast its leaf,
Sells the last scantling, and transfers the price
To some shrewd sharper, ere it buds again.
Estates are landscapes, gaz'd upon awhile,
Then advertis'd, and auctioneer'd away.

The country starves, and they that feed th' o'ercharg'd
And surfeited lewd town with her fair dues,
By a just judgment strip and starve themselves.
The wings that waft our riches out of sight
Grow on the gamester's elbows, and th' alert
And nimble motion of those restless joints,
That never tire, soon fans them all away.
Improvement too, the idol of the age,
Is fed with many a victim. Lo! he comes—
The omnipotent magician, Brown, appears.
Down falls the venerable pile, th' abode
Of our forefathers, a grave whisker'd race,
But tasteless. Springs a palace in its stead,
But in a distant spot; where more expos'd,
It may enjoy th' advantage of the north,
And aguish east, till time shall have transform'd
Those naked acres to a sheltering grove.
He speaks. The lake in front becomes a lawn,
Woods vanish, hills subside, and vallies rise,
And streams, as if created for his use,

Pursue

Pursue the track of his directing wand,
 Sinuous or straight, now rapid and now slow,
 Now murmur'ing soft, now roaring in cascades,
 Ev'n as he bids, Th' enraptur'd owner smiles,
 'Tis finish'd; and yet, finish'd as it seems,
 Still wants a grace, th' loveliest it could show,
 A mine to satisfy th' enormous cost.
 Drain'd to the last poor item of his wealth,
 He sighs, departs, and leaves th' accomplish'd plan
 That he has touch'd, retouch'd, many a long day
 Labor'd, and many a night pursu'd in dreams,
 Just when it meets his hopes, and proves the heav'n
 He wanted, for a wealthier to enjoy.
 And now perhaps the glorious hour is come,
 When, having no stake left, no pledge t' endear
 Her int'rests, or that gives her sacred cause
 A moment's operation on his love,
 He burns with most intense and flagrant zeal
 To serve his country. Ministerial grace
 Deals him out money from the public chest,

Or, if that mine be shut, some private purse
Supplies his need with an usurious loan,
To be refunded duly, when his vote,
Well-manag'd, shall have earn'd its worthy price.
Oh innocent, compar'd with arts like these,
Crape and cock'd pistol, and the whistling ball
Sent through the trav'ler's temples ! He that finds
One drop of heav'n's sweet mercy in his cup,
Can dig, beg, rot, and perish well-content,
So he may wrap himself in honest rags
At his last gasp ; but could not for a world
Fifth up his dirty and dependent bread
From pools and ditches of the commonwealth,
Sordid and sick'ning at his own success.

Ambition, av'rice, penury incurr'd
By endless riot ; vanity, the lust
Of pleasure and variety, dispatch,
As duly as the swallows disappear,
The world of wand'ring knights and squires to town.

London

London ingulphs them all. The shark is there,
And the shark's prey; the spendthrift, and the leech
That sucks him. There the sycophant, and he
Who, with bare-headed and obsequious bows,
Begs a warm office, doom'd to a cold jail,
And groat per diem, if his patron frown.
The levee swarms, as if, in golden pomp,
Were character'd on ev'ry statesman's door,
"BATTER'D AND BANKRUPT FORTUNES MENDED HERE."

These are the charms that fully and eclipse
The charms of nature. 'Tis the cruel gripe
That lean hard-handed poverty inflicts,
The hope of better things, the chance to win,
The wish to shine, the thirst to be amus'd,
That at the sound of Winter's hoary wing,
Unpeople all our counties, of such herds
Of flutt'ring, loit'ring, cringing, begging, loose
And wanton vagrants, as make London, vast
And boundless as it is, a crowded coop.

Oh thou, resort and mart of all the earth,
Chequer'd with all complexions of mankind,
And spotted with all crimes ; in whom I see
Much that I love, and more that I admire,
And all that I abhor ; thou freckled fair,
That pleases and yet shocks me, I can laugh
And I can weep, can hope, and can despond,
Feel wrath and pity, when I think on thee !
Ten righteous would have sav'd a city once,
And thou hast many righteous.—Well for thee—
That salt preserves thee ; more corrupted else,
And therefore more obnoxious at this hour,
Than Sodom in her day had pow'r to be,
For whom God heard his Abr'am plead in vain,

THE
T A S K.

BOOK IV.

ARGUMENT of the FOURTH BOOK,

The post comes in.—The news-paper is read.—The world contemplated at a distance.—Address to Winter.—The rural amusements of a winter evening compared with the fashionable ones.—Address to evening.—A brown study.—Fall of snow in the evening.—The waggoner.—A poor family-piece.—The rural thief.—Public houses.—The multitude of them censured.—The farmer's daughter, what she was — What she is.—The simplicity of country manners almost lost.—Causes of the change.—Desertion of the country by the rich.—Neglect of magistrates.—The militia principally in fault.—The new recruit and his transformation.—Reflection on bodies corporate.—The love of rural objects natural to all, and never to be totally extinguished,

T H E
T A S K.

B O O K IV.
T H E W I N T E R E V E N I N G.

H A R K ! 'tis the twanging horn ! o'er yonder bridge,
That with its wearisome but needful length
Bestrides the wintry flood, in which the moon
Sees her unwrinkled face reflected bright ;
He comes, the herald of a noisy world,
With spatter'd boots, strapp'd waist, and frozen locks,
News from all nations lumb'ring at his back.
True to his charge, the close-pack'd load behind,
Yet careless what he brings, his one concern
Is to conduct it to the destin'd inn,

And

And having dropp'd th' expected bag—pafs on.
He whistles as he goes, light-hearted wretch,
Cold and yet cheerful: meffenger of grief
Perhaps to thoufands, and of joy to fome,
To him indiff'rent whether grief or joy.
Houfes in afhes, and the fall of ftocks,
Births, deaths, and marriages, epiftles wet
With tears, that trickled down the writers' cheeks,
Fast as the periods from his fluent quill,
Or charg'd with am'rous fighs of abfent fwains,
Or nymphs responsive, equally affect
His horfe and him, unconfcious of them all,
But oh th' important budget! usher'd in
With fuch heart-fhaking mufic, who can fay
What are its tidings? have our troops awak'd?
Or do they ftill, as if with opium drugg'd,
Snore to the murmurs of th' Atlantic wave?
Is India free? and does ſhe wear her plum'd
And jewell'd turban with a fmile of peace,
Or do we grind her ftill? The grand debate,

The

The popular harangue, the tart reply,
The logic, and the wisdom, and the wit,
And the loud laugh—I long to know them all;
I burn to fet th' imprison'd wranglers free,
And give them voice and utt'rance once again,

Now stir the fire, and close the shutters fast,
Let fall the curtains, wheel the sofa round,
And, while the bubbling and loud-hissing urn
Throws up a steamy column, and the cups,
That cheer but not inebriate, wait on each,
So let us welcome peaceful evening in.
Not such his evening, who with shining face
Sweats in the crowded theatre, and squeez'd
And bor'd with elbow-points through both his sides,
Out-scolds the ranting actor on the stage.
Nor his, who patient stands till his feet throb,
And his head thumps, to feed upon the breath
Of patriots, bursting with heroic rage,
Or placemen, all tranquillity and smiles.

This

This folio of four pages, happy work !
Which not ev'n critics criticise ; that holds
Inquisitive attention, while I read,
Fast bound in chains of silence, which the fair,
Though eloquent themselves, yet fear to break ;
What is it but a map of busy life,
Its fluctuations, and its vast concerns ?
Here runs the mountainous and craggy ridge
That tempts ambition. On the summit, see,
The seals of office glitter in his eyes ;
He climbs, he pants, he grasps them. At his heels,
Close at his heels, a demagogue ascends,
And with a dext'rous jerk soon twists him down,
And wins them, but to lose them in his turn.
Here rills of oily eloquence, in soft
Meanders lubricate the course they take ;
The modest speaker is ashamed and griev'd
T' engross a moment's notice, and yet begs,
Begs a propitious ear for his poor thoughts,
However trivial all that he conceives.

Book iv. THE WINTER EVENING. 141

Sweet bashfulness ! it claims, at least, this praise ;
The dearth of information and good sense
That it foretells us, always comes to pass.
Cataracts of declamation thunder here,
There forests of no meaning spread the page,
In which all comprehension wanders lost ;
While fields of pleasantry amuse us there,
With merry descants on a nation's woes.
The rest appears a wilderness of strange
But gay confusion ; roses for the cheeks,
And lilies for the brows of faded age,
Teeth for the toothless, ringlets for the bald,
Heav'n, earth, and ocean plunder'd of their sweets,
Nectareous essences, Olympian dews,
Sermons and city feasts, and fav'rite airs,
Æthereal journies, submarine exploits,
And Katterfelto, with his hair on end
At his own wonders, wond'ring for his bread.

'Tis pleasant through the loop-holes of retreat
To peep at such a world ; to see the stir

Of

Of the great Babel, and not feel the crowd ;
To hear the roar she sends through all her gates,
At a safe distance, where the dying sound
Falls a soft murmur on th' uninjur'd ear.
Thus sitting, and surveying thus at ease
The globe and its concerns, I seem advanc'd
To some secure and more than mortal height,
That lib'rates and exempts me from them all.
It turns submitted to my view, turns round
With all its generations ; I behold
The tumult, and am still. The found of war
Has lost its terrors ere it reaches me ;
Grieves, but alarms me not. I mourn the pride
And av'rice that make man a wolf to man,
Hear the faint echo of those brazen throats
By which he speaks the language of his heart,
And sigh, but never tremble at the sound.
He travels and expatiates, as the bee
From flow'r to flow'r, so he from land to land ;
The manners, customs, policy of all,

Pay

Book iv. THE WINTER EVENING. 143

Pay contribution to the store he gleans ;
He sucks intelligence in ev'ry clime,
And spreads the honey of his deep research
At his return, a rich repast for me.
He travels, and I too. I tread his deck,
Ascend his topmast, through his peering eyes
Discover countries, with a kindred heart
Suffer his woes, and share in his escapes ;
While fancy, like the finger of a clock,
Runs the great circuit, and is still at home.

Oh Winter ! ruler of th' inverted year,
Thy scatter'd hair with fleet like ashes fill'd,
Thy breath congeal'd upon thy lips, thy cheeks
Fring'd with a beard made white with other snows
Than those of age ; thy forehead wrapt in clouds,
A leafless branch thy sceptre, and thy throne
A sliding car, indebted to no wheels,
But urg'd by storms along its slipp'ry way ;
I love thee, all unlovely as thou seem'st,

And dreaded as thou art. Thou hold'st the fun
A pris'ner in the yet undawning East,
Short'ning his journey between morn and noon,
And hurrying him, impatient of his stay,
Down to the rosy West ; but kindly still
Compensating his loss with added hours
Of social converse and instructive ease,
And gathering at short notice, in one group,
The family dispers'd, and fixing thought,
Not less dispers'd by day-light and its cares.
I crown thee King of intimate delights,
Fire-side enjoyments, home-born happiness,
And all the comforts that the lowly roof
Of undisturb'd retirement, and the hours
Of long uninterrupted evening, know.
No ratt'ling wheels stop short before these gates ;
No powder'd pert proficient in the art
Of sounding an alarm, assaults these doors
Till the street rings ; no stationary steeds
Cough their own knell, while, heedless of the sound,

The

The silent circle fan themselves, and quake :
 But here the needle plies its busy task,
 The pattern grows, the well-depicted flow'r,
 Wrought patiently into the snowy lawn,
 Unfolds its bosom ; buds, and leaves, and sprigs,
 And curling tendrils, gracefully dispos'd,
 Follow the nimble finger of the fair ;
 A wreath that cannot fade, of flow'rs that blow
 With most success when all besides decay.
 The poet's or historian's page, by one
 Made vocal for th' amusement of the rest ;
 The sprightly lyre, whose treasure of sweet sounds
 The touch from many a trembling chord shakes out ;
 And the clear voice symphonious, yet distinct,
 And in the charming strife triumphant still,
 Beguile the night, and set a keener edge
 On female industry ; the threaded steel
 Flies swiftly, and unfelt the task proceeds.
 The volume clos'd, the customary rites
 Of the last meal commence. A Roman meal ;

Such as the mistress of the world once found
Delicious, when her patriots of high note,
Perhaps by moonlight, at their humble doors,
And under an old oak's domestic shade,
Enjoy'd, spare feast ! a radish and an egg.
Discourse ensues, not trivial, yet not dull,
Nor such as with a frown forbids the play
Of fancy, or proscribes the sound of mirth ;
Nor do we madly, like an impious world,
Who deem religion frenzy, and the God
That made them an intruder on their joys,
Start at his awful name, or deem his praise
A jarring note. Themes of a graver tone,
Exciting oft our gratitude and love,
While we retrace with mem'ry's pointing wand,
That calls the past to our exact review,
The dangers we have 'scap'd, the broken snare,
The disappointed foe, deliv'rance found.
Unlook'd for, life preserv'd and peace restor'd,
Fruits of omnipotent eternal love.

Oh

Oh evenings worthy of the Gods! exclaim'd
The Sabine bard. Oh evenings, I reply,
More to be priz'd and coveted than yours,
As more illumin'd, and with nobler truths,
That I and mine, and those we love, enjoy.

Is winter hideous in a garb like this?
Needs he the tragic fur, the smoke of lamps,
The pent-up breath of an unsav'ry throng,
To thaw him into feeling, or the smart
And snappish dialogue, that flippant wits
Call comedy, to prompt him with a smile?
The self-complacent actor, when he views
(Stealing a side-long glance at a full house)
The slope of faces, from the floor to th' roof,
(As if one master-spring controul'd them all)
Relax'd into an universal grin,
Sees not a count'nance there that speaks a joy
Half so refin'd or so sincere as ours.
Cards were superfluous here, with all the tricks

That idleness has ever yet contriv'd
To fill the void of an unfurnish'd brain,
To palliate dullness, and give time a shove.
Time, as he passes us, has a dove's wing,
Unfoil'd and swift, and of a silken sound ;
But the world's time, is time in masquerade.
Theirs, should I paint him, has his pinions fledg'd
With motley plumes, and where the peacock shows
His azure eyes, is tinctur'd black and red
With spots quadrangular of di'mond form,
Enfanguin'd hearts, clubs typical of strife,
And spades, the emblem of untimely graves.
What should be, and what was an hour-glass once,
Becomes a dice-box, and a billiard mast
Well does the work of his destructive scythe.
Thus deck'd, he charms a world whom fashion blinds
To his true worth, most pleas'd when idle most,
Whose only happy are their wasted hours.
Ev'n misses, at whose age their mother's wore
The back-string and the bib, assume the dress

Of womanhood, fit pupils in the school
Of card-devoted time, and, night by night,
Plac'd at some vacant corner of the board,
Learn ev'ry trick, and soon play all the game.
But truce with censure. Roving as I rove,
Where shall I find an end, or how proceed?
As he that travels far, oft turns aside
To view some rugged rock or mould'ring tow'r,
Which seen, delights him not; then coming home,
Describes and prints it, that the world may know
How far he went for what was nothing worth;
So I, with brush in hand and pallet spread,
With colours mix'd for a far diff'rent use,
Paint cards and dolls, and ev'ry idle thing
That fancy finds in her excursive flights.

Come, Evening, once again, season of peace,
Return, sweet Evening, and continue long!
Methinks I see thee in the streaky west,
With matron-step slow-moving, while the night

Treads on thy sweeping train ; one hand employ'd
In letting fall the curtain of repose
On bird and beast, the other charg'd for man
With sweet oblivion of the cares of day :
Not sumptuously adorn'd, nor needing aid,
Like homely featur'd night, of clust'ring gems ;
A star or two, just twinkling on thy brow,
Suffices thee ; save that the moon is thine
No less than hers, not worn indeed on high
With ostentatious pageantry, but set
With modest grandeur in thy purple zone,
Resplendent less, but of an ampler round.
Come then, and thou shalt find thy vot'ry calm,
Or make me so. Composure is thy gift :
And whether I devote thy gentle hours
To books, to music, or the poet's toil ;
To weaving nets for bird-alluring fruit ;
Or twining filken threads round iv'ry reels,
When they command whom man was born to please ;
I slight thee not, but make thee welcome still.

Just

Just when our drawing-rooms begin to blaze
 With lights, by clear reflection multiplied
 From many a mirrour, in which he of Gath,
 Goliah, might have seen his giant bulk
 Whole, without stooping, tow'ring crest and all,
 My pleasures too begin. But me, perhaps,
 The glowing hearth may satisfy awhile
 With faint illumination, that uplifts
 The shadow to the ceiling, there by fits
 Dancing uncouthly to the quiv'ring flame.
 Not undelightful is an hour to me
 So spent in parlour twilight; such a gloom
 Suits well the thoughtful or unthinking mind,
 The mind contemplative, with some new theme
 Pregnant, or indispos'd alike to all.
 Laugh ye, who boast your more mercurial pow'rs,
 That never feel a stupor, know no pause,
 Nor need one; I am conscious, and confess,
 Fearless, a soul that does not always think.
 Me oft has fancy, ludicrous and wild,

Sooth'd with a waking dream of houses, tow'rs,
Trees, churches, and strange visages, express'd
In the red cinders, while with poring eye
I gaz'd, myself creating what I saw.
Nor less amus'd have I quiescent watch'd
The footy films that play upon the bars
Pendulous, and foreboding, in the view
Of superstition, prophesying still,
Though still deceiv'd, some stranger's near approach.
'Tis thus the understanding takes repose
In indolent vacuity of thought,
And sleeps and is refresh'd. Meanwhile the face
Conceals the mood lethargic with a mask
Of deep deliberation, as the man
Were task'd to his full strength, absorb'd and lost.
Thus oft, reclin'd at ease, I lose an hour
At evening, till at length the freezing blast,
That sweeps the bolted shutter, summons home
The recollected powers, and snapping short
The glassy threads, with which the fancy weaves

Her

Book iv. THE WINTER EVENING. 153

Her brittle toys, restores me to myself.

How calm is my recess, and how the frost,
Raging abroad, and the rough wind, endear
The silence and the warmth enjoy'd within.

I saw the woods and fields, at close of day,

A variegated show ; the meadows green,

Though faded ; and the lands, where lately wav'd

The golden harvest, of a mellow brown,

Upturn'd so lately by the forceful share.

I saw far off the weedy fallows smile

With verdure not unprofitable, graz'd

By flocks, fast feeding and selecting each

His fav'rite herb ; while all the leafless groves,

That skirt th' horizon, wore a fable hue,

Scarce notic'd in the kindred dusk of eve.

To-morrow brings a change, a total change !

Which even now, though silently perform'd,

And slowly, and by most unfelt, the face

Of universal nature undergoes.

Fast falls a fleecy show'r : the downy flakes

Descending, and, with never-ceasing lapse,
Softly alighting upon all below,
Assimilate all objects. Earth receives
Gladly the thick'ning mantle, and the green
And tender blade, that fear'd the chilling blast,
Escapes unhurt beneath so warm a veil.

In such a world, so thorny, and where none
Finds happiness unblighted, or, if found,
Without some thiftly sorrow at its side,
It seems the part of wisdom, and no sin
Against the law of love, to measure lots
With less distinguish'd than ourselves, that thus
We may with patience bear our mod'rate ills,
And sympathize with others, suff'ring more.
Ill fares the trav'ller now, and he that stalks
In pond'rous boots beside his reeking team,
The wain goes heavily, impeded fore
By congregated loads adhering close
To the clogg'd wheels; and in its sluggish pace,

Noifelefs, appears a moving hill of fnow.
 The toiling fteeds expand the noftril wide,
 While ev'ry breath, by refpiration ftrong
 Forc'd downward, is confolidated foon
 Upon their jutting chefts. He, form'd to bear
 The pelting brunt of the tempeftuous night,
 With half-fhut eyes, and pucker'd cheeks, and teeth
 Prefented bare againft the ftorm, plods on.
 One hand fecures his hat, fave when with both
 He brandifhes his pliant length of whip,
 Refounding oft, and never heard in vain.
 Oh happy ! and, in my account, denied
 That fenfibility of pain with which
 Refinement is endu'd, thrice happy thou.
 Thy frame, robuft and hardy, feels indeed
 The piercing cold, but feels it unimpair'd.
 The learned finger never need explore
 Thy vig'rous pulse, and the unhealthful Eaft,
 That breathes the fpleen, and fearches ev'ry bone
 Of the infirm, is wholefome air to thee.

Thy

Thy days roll on exempt from household care ;
Thy waggon is thy wife ; and the poor beasts
That drag the dull companion to and fro,
Thine helpless charge, dependent on thy care.
Ah, treat them kindly ! rude as thou appear'st,
Yet show that thou hast mercy, which the great,
With needless hurry whirl'd from place to place,
Humane as they would seem, not always show.

Poor, yet industrious, modest, quiet, neat,
Such claim compassion in a night like this,
And have a friend in ev'ry feeling heart.
Warm'd, while it lasts, by labor, all day long
They brave the season, and yet find at eve,
Ill clad and fed but sparsely, time to cool.
The frugal housewife trembles when she lights
Her scanty stock of brush-wood, blazing clear,
But dying soon, like all terrestrial joys.
The few small embers left she nurses well,
And while her infant race, with outspread hands

And

And crowded knees, fit cowering o'er the sparks,
 Retires, content to quake, so they be warm'd.
 The man feels least, as more inur'd than she
 To winter, and the current in his veins
 More briskly mov'd by his severer toil ;
 Yet he too finds his own distress in theirs.
 The taper soon extinguish'd, which I saw
 Dangled along at the cold finger's end
 Just when the day declin'd, and the brown loaf
 Lodg'd on the shelf, half-eaten without sauce
 Of sav'ry cheese, or butter costlier still,
 Sleep seems their only refuge : for, alas !
 Where penury is felt the thought is chain'd,
 And sweet colloquial pleasures are but few.
 With all this thrift they thrive not. All the care
 Ingenious parsimony takes, but just
 Saves the small inventory, bed and stool,
 Skillet and old carv'd chest, from public sale.
 They live, and live without extorted alms
 From grudging hands, but other boast have none

To sooth their honest pride, that scorns to beg ;
Nor comfort else, but in their mutual love.
I praise you much, ye meek and patient pair,
For ye are worthy ; chusing rather far
A dry but independent crust, hard earn'd,
And eaten with a sigh, than to endure
The rugged frowns and insolent rebuffs
Of knaves in office, partial in the work
Of distribution ; lib'ral of their aid
To clam'rous importunity in rags,
But oft-times deaf to suppliant, who would blush
To wear a tatter'd garb however coarse,
Whom famine cannot reconcile to filth ;
These ask with painful shyness, and refus'd
Because deserving, silently retire.
But be ye of good courage. Time itself
Shall much befriend you. Time shall give increase,
And all your num'rous progeny, well-train'd
But helpless, in few years shall find their hands,
And labor too. Meanwhile ye shall not want

What,

What, conscious of your virtues, we can spare,
Nor what a wealthier than ourselves may fend.
I mean the man, who, when the distant poor
Need help, denies them nothing but his name.

But poverty, with most who whimper forth
Their long complaints, is self-inflicted woe;
Th' effect of laziness or sottish waste.
Now goes the nightly thief prowling abroad
For plunder; much solicitous how best
He may compensate for a day of sloth,
By works of darkness and nocturnal wrong.
Woe to the gard'ner's pale, the farmer's hedge
Plash'd neatly, and secur'd with driven stakes
Deep in the loamy bank. Uptorn by strength,
Resistless in so bad a cause, but lame
To better deeds, he bundles up the spoil,
An ass's burthen, and, when laden most
And heaviest, light of foot steals fast away.
Nor does the boarded hovel better guard

The

The well-stack'd pile of riven logs and roots
From his pernicious force. Nor will he leave
Unwrench'd the door, however well secur'd,
Where chanticleer amidst his haram sleeps
In unsuspecting pomp. Twitch'd from the perch,
He gives the princely bird, with all his wives,
To his voracious bag, struggling in vain,
And loudly wond'ring at the sudden change.
Nor this to feed his own. 'Twere some excuse
Did pity of their sufferings warp aside
His principle, and tempt him into sin
For their support, so destitute. But they
Neglected pine at home, themselves, as more
Expos'd than others, with less scruple made
His victims, robb'd of their defenceless all.
Cruel is all he does. 'Tis quenchless thirst
Of ruinous ebriety that prompts
His ev'ry action, and imbrates the man.
Oh for a law to noose the villain's neck
Who starves his own ; who persecutes the blood

He

He gave them, in his children's veins, and hates
And wrongs the woman he has sworn to love.

Pass where we may, through city or through town,
Village or hamlet of this merry land,
Though lean and beggar'd, ev'ry twentieth pace
Conducts th' unguarded nose to such a whiff
Of stale debauch, forth-issuing from the styes
That law has licens'd, as makes temp'rance reel.
There sit, involv'd and lost in curling clouds
Of Indian fume, and guzzling deep, the boor,
The lackey, and the groom : the craftsman there
Takes a Lethean leave of all his toil ;
Smith, cobbler, joiner, he that plies the sheers,
And he that kneads the dough ; all loud alike,
All learned, and all drunk. The fiddle screams
Plaintive and piteous, as it wept and wail'd
Its wafted tones and harmony unheard :
Fierce the dispute, whate'er the theme ; while she,
Fell Discord, arbitress of such debate,

Perch'd on the sign-post, holds with even hand
Her undecisive scales. In this she lays
A weight of ignorance, in that, of pride.
And smiles delighted with th' eternal poise.
Dire is the frequent curse, and its twin sound
The cheek-distending oath, not to be prais'd
As ornamental, musical, polite,
Like those which modern senators employ,
Whose oath is rhet'ric, and who swear for fame.
Behold the schools in which plebeian minds,
Once simple, are initiated in arts,
Which some may practise with politer grace,
But none with readier skill ! 'tis here they learn
The road that leads, from competence and peace,
To indigence and rapine ; till at last
Society, grown weary of the load,
Shakes her incumber'd lap, and casts them out.
But censure profits little : vain th' attempt
To advertise in verse a public pest,
That, like the filth with which the peasant feeds

His

Book iv. THE WINTER EVENING. 163

His hungry acres, stinks, and is of use.
Th' excise is fatten'd with the rich result
Of all this riot ; and ten thousand casks,
For ever dribbling out their base contents,
Touch'd by the Midas finger of the state,
Bleed gold for Ministers to sport away.
Drink and be mad then ; 'tis your country bids ;
Gloriously drunk, obey th' important call ;
Her cause demands th' assistance of your throats ;
Ye all can swallow, and she asks no more.

Would I had fall'n upon those happier days
That poets celebrate ; those golden times
And those Arcadian scenes that Maro sings,
And Sidney, warbler of poetic prose.
Nymphs were Dianas then, and swains had hearts
That felt their virtues : innocence, it seems,
From courts dismiss'd, found shelter in the groves.
The footsteps of simplicity, impress'd
Upon the yielding herbage (so they sing)

Then were not all effac'd : then speech profane,
And manners profligate, were rarely found,
Observ'd as prodigies, and soon reclaim'd.
Vain wish ! those days were never : airy dreams
Sat for the picture ; and the poet's hand,
Imparting substance to an empty shade,
Impos'd a gay delirium for a truth.
Grant it : I still must envy them an age
That favor'd such a dream ; in days like these
Impossible, when virtue is so scarce,
That to suppose a scene where she presides,
Is tramontane, and stumbles all belief.
No : we are polish'd now. The rural lass,
Whom once her virgin modesty and grace,
Her artless manners, and her neat attire,
So dignified, that she was hardly less
Than the fair shepherdess of old romance,
Is seen no more. The character is lost.
Her head, adorn'd with lappets pinn'd aloft,
And ribbands streaming gay, superbly rais'd,

And magnified beyond all human size,
 Indebted to some smart wig-weaver's hand
 For more than half the tresses it sustains;
 Her elbows ruffled, and her tott'ring form
 Ill propp'd upon French heels; she might be deem'd
 (But that the basket dangling on her arm
 Interprets her more truly) of a rank
 Too proud for dairy-work or sale of eggs.
 Expect her soon with foot-boy at her heels,
 No longer blushing for her awkward load,
 Her train and her umbrella all her care,

The town has ting'd the country; and the stain
 Appears a spot upon a vestal's robe,
 The worse for what it soils. The fashion runs
 Down into scenes still rural; but, alas!
 Scenes rarely grac'd with rural manners now.
 Time was when, in the pastoral retreat,
 Th' unguarded door was safe; men did not watch
 T' invade another's right, or guard their own.

Then sleep was undisturb'd by fear, unscar'd
By drunken howlings; and the chilling tale
Of midnight murder, was a wonder heard
With doubtful credit, told to frighten babes.
But farewell now to unsuspicious nights,
And slumbers unalarm'd: now, ere you sleep,
See that your polish'd arms be prim'd with care,
And drop the night-bolt; ruffians are abroad,
And the first larum of the cock's shrill throat
May prove a trumpet, summoning your ear
To horrid sounds of hostile feet within.
Ev'n day-light has its dangers; and the walk
Through pathless wastes and woods, unconscious once
Of other tenants than melodious birds,
Or harmless flocks, is hazardous and bold.
Lamented change! to which full many a cause
Invet'rate, hopeless of a cure, conspires.
The course of human things from good to ill,
From ill to worse, is fatal, never fails.
Increase of pow'r begets increase of wealth;

Wealth

Wealth luxury, and luxury excess ; —
 Excess, the scrophulous and itchy plague
 That seizes first the opulent, descends
 To the next rank contagious, and in time
 Taints downward all the graduated scale
 Of order, from the chariot to the plough.
 The rich, and they that have an arm to check
 The license of the lowest in degree,
 Desert their office ; and themselves, intent
 On pleasure, haunt the capital, and thus
 To all the violence of lawless hands
 Re-sign the scenes their presence might protect.
 Authority herself not seldom sleeps,
 Though resident, and witness of the wrong.
 The plump convivial parson often bears
 The magisterial sword in vain, and lays
 His rev'rence and his worship both to rest
 On the same cushion of habitual sloth.
 Perhaps timidity restrains his arm ;
 When he should strike he trembles, and sets free,

Himself enslav'd by terror of the band,
Th' audacious convict, whom he dares not bind.
Perhaps, though by profession ghostly pure,
He too may have his vice, and sometimes prove
Less dainty than becomes his grave outside
In lucrative concerns. Examine well
His milk-white hand ; the palm is hardly clean—
But here and there an ugly smutch appears.
Foh ! 'twas a bribe that left it : he has touch'd
Corruption. Who so seeks an audit here
Propitious, pays his tribute, game or fish,
Wild-fowl or ven'son, and his errand speeds,

But faster far, and more than all the rest,
A noble cause, which none who bears a spark
Of public virtue ever wish'd remov'd,
Works the deplor'd and mischievous effect,
'Tis universal foldiership has stabb'd
The heart of merit in the meaner class,
Arms, through the vanity and brainless rage

Of

Of those that bear them, in whatever cause,
 Seem most at variance with all moral good,
 And incompatible with serious thought.
 The clown, the child of nature, without guile,
 Blest with an infant's ignorance of all
 But his own simple pleasures, now and then
 A wrestling match, a foot-race, or a fair;
 Is ballotted, and trembles at the news:
 Sheepish he doffs his hat, and, mumbling, swears
 A Bible-oath to be whate'er they please,
 To do he knows not what. The task perform'd,
 That instant he becomes the serjeant's care,
 His pupil, and his torment, and his jest.
 His awkward gait, his introverted toes,
 Bent knees, round shoulders, and dejected looks,
 Procure him many a curse. By slow degrees,
 Unapt to learn, and form'd of stubborn stuff,
 He yet by slow degrees puts off himself,
 Grows conscious of a change, and likes it well:
 He stands erect; his slouch becomes a walk;

He

He steps right onward, martial in his air,
His form, and movement ; is as smart above
As meal and larded locks can make him ; wears
His hat, or his plum'd helmet, with a grace ;
And his three years of hero^{ship} expir'd,
Returns indignant to the slighted plough.
He hates the field, in which no life or drum
Attends him, drives his cattle to a march,
And fights for the smart comrades he has left.
'Twere well if his exterior change were all —
But with his clumsy port the wretch has lost
His ignorance and harmless manners too.
To swear, to game, to drink ; to shew at home,
By lewdness, idleness, and sabbath-breach,
The great proficiency he made abroad ;
T' astonish and to grieve his gazing friends ;
To break some maiden's and his mother's heart ;
To be a pest where he was useful once ;
Are his sole aim, and all his glory now.

*

Man

Man in society is like a flow'r
 Blown in its native bed : 'tis there alone
 His faculties, expanded in full bloom,
 Shine out ; there only reach their proper use.
 But man, associated and leagu'd with man
 By regal warrant, or self-join'd by bond
 For interest-sake, or swarming into clans
 Beneath one head for purposes of war,
 Like flow'rs selected from the rest, and bound
 And bundled close to fill some crowded vase,
 Fades rapidly, and, by compression marr'd,
 Contracts defilement not to be endur'd.
 Hence charter'd boroughs are such public plagues ;
 And burghers, men immaculate perhaps
 In all their private functions, once combin'd,
 Become a loathsome body, only fit
 For dissolution, hurtful to the main.
 Hence merchants, unimpeachable of sin
 Against the charities of domestic life,
 Incorporated, seem at once to lose

Their

Their nature, and, disclaiming all regard
For mercy and the common rights of man,
Build factories with blood, conducting trade
At the sword's point, and dying the white robe
Of innocent commercial justice red.
Hence too the field of glory, as the world
Mistake it, dazzled by its bright array,
With all its majesty of thund'ring pomp,
Enchanting music and immortal wreaths,
Is but a school where thoughtlessness is taught
On principle, where foppery atones
For folly, gallantry for ev'ry vice.

But, slighted as it is, and by the great
Abandon'd, and, which still I more regret,
Infected with the manners and the modes
It knew not once, the country wins me still,
I never fram'd a wish, or form'd a plan,
That flatter'd me with hopes of earthly bliss,
But there I laid the scene. There early stray'd

My

My fancy, ere yet liberty of choice
Had found me, or the hope of being free.
My very dreams were rural, rural too
The first-born efforts of my youthful muse,
Sportive, and jingling her poetic bells
Ere yet her ear was mistress of their pow'rs.
No bard could please me but whose lyre was tun'd
To Nature's praises. Heroes and their feats
Fatigu'd me, never weary of the pipe
Of Tityrus, assembling, as he sang,
The rustic throng beneath his fav'rite beech.
Then Milton had indeed a poet's charms :
New to my taste, his Paradise surpass'd
The struggling efforts of my boyish tongue
To speak its excellence ; I danc'd for joy.
I marvel'd much that at so ripe an age
As twice sev'n years, his beauties had then first
Engag'd my wonder, and admiring still,
And still admiring, with regret suppos'd
The joy half lost because not sooner found.

Thee too, enamour'd of the life I lov'd,
Pathetic in its praise, in its pursuit
Determin'd, and possessing it at last
With transports such as favor'd lovers feel,
I studied, priz'd, and wish'd that I had known,
Ingenious Cowley ! and though now reclaim'd,
By modern lights, from an erroneous taste,
I cannot but lament thy splendid wit
Entangled in the cobwebs of the schools.
I still revere thee, courtly though retir'd,
Though stretch'd at ease in Chertsey's silent bow'rs,
Not unemploy'd, and finding rich amends
For a lost world in solitude and verse.
'Tis born with all : the love of Nature's works
Is an ingredient in the compound, man,
Infus'd at the creation of the kind.
And though th' Almighty Maker has throughout
Discriminated each from each, by strokes
And touches of his hand, with so much art
Diversified, that two were never found

Twins

Book iv. THE WINTER EVENING. 175

Twins at all points—yet this obtains in all,
That all discern a beauty in his works,
And all can taste them : minds that have been form'd
And tutor'd with a relish more exact,
But none without some relish, none unmov'd.
It is a flame that dies not even there,
Where nothing feeds it : neither business, crowds,
Nor habits of luxurious city-life,
Whatever else they smother of true worth
In human bosoms, quench it, or abate.
The villas with which London stands begirt,
Like a swarth Indian with his belt of beads,
Prove it. A breath of unadult'rate air,
The glimpse of a green pasture, how they cheer
The citizen, and brace his languid frame !
Ev'n in the stifling bosom of the town,
A garden, in which nothing thrives, has charms
That soothe the rich possessor ; much consol'd
That here and there some sprigs of mournful mint,
Of nightshade, or valerian, grace the well

He

He cultivates. These serve him with a hint
That Nature lives ; that sight-refreshing green
Is still the liv'ry she delights to wear,
Though sickly samples of th' exub'rant whole.
What are the casements lin'd with creeping herbs,
The prouder fashes fronted with a range
Of orange, myrtle, or the fragrant weed,
The Frenchman's * darling ? Are they not all proofs
That man, immur'd in cities, still retains
His inborn inextinguishable thirst
Of rural scenes, compensating his loss
By supplemental shifts, the best he may ?
The most unfurnish'd with the means of life,
And they that never pass their brick-wall bounds
To range the fields and treat their lungs with air,
Yet feel the burning instinct : over-head
Suspend their crazy boxes, planted thick,
And water'd duly. There the pitcher stands

* Mignonnette.

A fragment,

Book iv. THE WINTER EVENING. 177

A fragment, and the spoutless tea-pot there;
Sad witnesses how close-pent man regrets
The country, with what ardour he contrives
A peep at nature, when he can no more.

Hail, therefore, patroness of health and ease,
And contemplation, heart-consoling joys
And harmless pleasures, in the throng'd abode
Of multitudes unknown! hail, rural life!
Address himself who will to the pursuit
Of honors, or emolument, or fame,
I shall not add myself to such a chace,
Thwart his attempts, or envy his success.
Some must be great. Great offices will have
Great talents: and God gives to ev'ry man
The virtue, temper, understanding, taste,
That lifts him in life, and lets him fall
Just in the niche he was ordain'd to fill.
To the deliv'rer of an injur'd land
He gives a tongue t' enlarge upon, an heart

To feel, and courage to redress her wrongs ;
To monarchs dignity, to judges sense,
To artists ingenuity and skill ;
To me an unambitious mind, content
In the low vale of life, that early felt
A wish for ease and leisure, and ere long
Found here that leisure and that ease I wish'd.

THE
T A S K.

BOOK V.

ARGUMENT of the FIFTH BOOK.

A frosty morning.—The foddering of cattle.—The woodman and his dog.—The poultry.—Whimsical effects of frost at a waterfall.—The Empress of Russia's palace of ice.—Amusements of monarchs.—War, one of them.—Wars, whence—And whence monarchy.—The evils of it.—English and French loyalty contrasted.—The Bastile, and a prisoner there.—Liberty the chief recommendation of this country.—Modern patriotism questionable, and why.—The perishable nature of the best human institutions.—Spiritual liberty not perishable.—The slavish state of man by nature.—Deliver him, Deist, if you can.—Grace must do it.—The respective merits of patriots and martyrs stated.—Their different treatment.—Happy freedom of the man whom grace makes free.—His relish of the works of God.—Address to the Creator.

THE T A S K.

B O O K V.

THE WINTER MORNING WALK.

'Tis morning ; and the sun with ruddy orb
Ascending, fires the horizon : while the clouds
That crowd away before the driving wind,
More ardent as the disk emerges more,
Resemble most some city in a blaze,
Seen through the leafless wood. His slanting ray
Slides ineffectual down the snowy vale,
And tinging all with his own rosy hue,
From ev'ry herb and ev'ry spiry blade
Stretches a length of shadow o'er the field.
Mine, spindling into longitude immense,

In spite of gravity, and sage remark
That I myself am but a fleeting shade,
Provokes me to a smile. With eye askance
I view the muscular proportion'd limb
Transform'd to a lean shank. The shapeless pair,
As they design'd to mock me, at my side
Take step for step ; and as I near approach
The cottage, walk along the plaister'd wall,
Prepost'rous sight ! the legs without the man.
The verdure of the plain lies buried deep
Beneath the dazzling deluge ; and the bents,
And coarser grass upbearing o'er the rest,
Of late unsightly and unseen, now shine
Conspicuous, and in bright apparel clad,
And hedg'd with icy feathers, nod superb.
The cattle moun in corners where the fence
Screens them, and seem half petrify'd to sleep
In unrecumbent sadness. There they wait
Their wonted fodder, not like hung'ring man
Fretful if unsupply'd, but silent, meek,

Book v. THE WINTER MORNING WALK. 183

And patient of the slow-pac'd swain's delay.
He from the stack carves out th' accustom'd load,
Deep-plunging, and again deep plunging oft
His broad keen knife into the solid mass;
Smooth as a wall the upright remnant stands,
With such undeviating and even force
He severs it away: no needless care
Left storms should overset the leaning pile
Deciduous, or its own unbalanc'd weight.
Forth goes the woodman, leaving unconcern'd
The cheerful haunts of man, to wield the axe
And drive the wedge in yonder forest drear,
From morn to eve his solitary task.
Shaggy, and lean, and shrewd, with pointed ears
And tail cropp'd short, half lurcher and half cur,
His dog attends him. Close behind his heel
Now creeps he slow; and now with many a frisk
Wide-scamp'ring, snatches up the drifted snow
With iv'ry teeth, or ploughs it with his snout;
Then shakes his powder'd coat, and barks for joy.

Heedless of all his pranks, the sturdy churl
Moves right toward the mark ; nor stops for aught,
But, now and then, with pressure of his thumb
T' adjust the fragrant charge of a short tube
That fumes beneath his nose : the trailing cloud
Streams far behind him, scenting all the air.
Now from the roost, or from the neighb'ring pale,
Where, diligent to catch the first faint gleam
Of smiling day, they gossip'd side by side,
Come trooping at the housewife's well-known call
The feather'd tribes domestic. Half on wing,
And half on foot, they brush the fleecy flood,
Conscious, and fearful of too deep a plunge.
The sparrows peep, and quit the sheltering eaves
To seize the fair occasion. Well they eye
The scatter'd grain, and thievishly resolv'd
T' escape th' impending famine, often scar'd
As oft return, a pert voracious kind.
Clean riddance quickly made, one only care
Remains to each, the search of sunny nook,

Or

Book v. THE WINTER MORNING WALK. 185

Or shed impervious to the blast. Resign'd
To sad necessity, the cock foregoes
His wonted strut, and wading at their head
With well-consider'd steps, seems to resent
His alter'd gait and stateliness retrench'd.
How find the myriads, that in summer cheer
The hills and vallies with their ceaseless songs,
Due sustenance, or where subsist they now ?
Earth yields them nought : th' imprison'd worm is safe
Beneath the frozen clod ; all seeds of herbs
Lie cover'd close, and berry-bearing thorns
That feed the thrush (whatever some suppose)
Afford the smaller minstrels no supply.
The long protracted rigor of the year
Thins all their num'rous flocks. In chinks and holes
Ten thousand seek an unmolested end,
As instinct prompts ; self buried ere they die.
The very rooks and daws forsake the fields,
Where neither grub nor root nor earth-nut now
Repays their labor more ; and perch'd aloft

By

By the way-side, or stalking in the path,
Lean pensioners upon the trav'lers track,
Pick up their nauseous dole, though sweet to them,
Of voided pulse or half-digested grain.
The streams are lost amid the splendid blank,
O'erwhelming all distinction. On the flood,
Indurated and fixt, the snowy weight
Lies undissolv'd; while silently beneath,
And unperceiv'd, the current steals away.
Not so, where scornful of a check it leaps
The mill-dam, dashes on the restless wheel,
And wantons in the pebbly gulph below:
No frost can bind it there; its utmost force
Can but arrest the light and smokey mist
That in its fall the liquid sheet throws wide.
And see where it has hung th' embroider'd banks
With forms so various, that no pow'rs of art,
The pencil or the pen, may trace the scene!
Here glitt'ring turrets rise, upbearing high
(Fantastic misarrangement!) on the roof

Large

Book v. THE WINTER MORNING WALK. 187

Large growth of what may seem the sparkling trees
And shrubs of fairy land. The crystal drops
That trickle down the branches, fast congeal'd,
Shoot into pillars of pellucid length,
And prop the pile they but adorn'd before.
Here grotto within grotto safe defies
The sun-beam : there imbo's'd and fretted wild,
The growing wonder takes a thousand shapes
Capricious, in which fancy seeks in vain
The likeness of some object seen before.
Thus nature works as if to mock at art,
And in defiance of her rival pow'rs ;
By these fortuitous and random strokes
Performing such inimitable feats,
As she with all her rules can never reach.
Less worthy of applause, though more admir'd,
Because a novelty, the work of man,
Imperial mistress of the fur-clad Rus !
Thy most magnificent and mighty freak,
The wonder of the North. No forest fell

When

When thou would'st build ; no quarry sent its stores
T' enrich thy walls : but thou didst hew the floods,
And make thy marble of the glassy wave.
In such a palace Aristæus found
Cyrene, when he bore the plaintive tale
Of his lost bees to her maternal ear :
In such a palace poetry might place
The armoury of winter ; where his troops,
The gloomy clouds, find weapons, arrowy fleet,
Skin-piercing volley, blossom-bruising hail,
And snow that often blinds the trav'ler's course,
And wraps him in an unexpected tomb.
Silently as a dream the fabric rose ;
No sound of hammer or of saw was there.
Ice upon ice, the well-adjusted parts
Were soon conjoin'd, nor other cement ask'd
Than water interfus'd to make them one.
Lamps gracefully dispos'd, and of all hues,
Illumin'd ev'ry side : a wat'ry light
Gleam'd through the clear transparency, that seem'd

Another

Book v. THE WINTER MORNING WALK. 189

Another moon new ris'n, or meteor fall'n
From heav'n to earth, of lambent flame serene.
So stood the brittle prodigy ; though smooth
And slipp'ry the materials, yet frost-bound
Firm as a rock. Nor wanted aught within,
That royal residence might well befit,
For grandeur or for use. Long wavy wreaths
Of flow'rs, that fear'd no enemy but warmth,
Blush'd on the pannels. Mirrour needed none
Where all was vitreous ; but in order due
Convivial table and commodious seat
(What seem'd at least commodious seat) were there,
Sofa, and couch, and high-built throne august.
The same lubricity was found in all,
And all was moist to the warm touch ; a scene
Of evanescent glory, once a stream,
And soon to slide into a stream again.
Alas ! 'twas but a mortifying stroke
Of undesign'd severity, that glanc'd,
(Made by a monarch) on her own estate,

On human grandeur and the courts of kings.

'Twas transient in its nature, as in show

'Twas durable ; as worthless, as it seem'd

Intrinsically precious ; to the foot

Treach'rous and false ; it smil'd, and it was cold.

Great princes have great playthings. Some have play'd

At hewing mountains into men, and some

At building human wonders mountain-high.

Some have amus'd the dull, sad years of life,

Life spent in indolence, and therefore sad,

With schemes of monumental fame ; and sought

By pyramids and mausolean pomp.

Short-liv'd themselves, t' immortalize their bones.

Some seek diversion in the tented field,

And make the sorrows of mankind their sport.

But war's a game, which, were their subjects wise,

Kings would not play at. Nations would do well

T' extort their truncheons from the puny hands

Of heroes, whose infirm and baby minds

Are

Book v. THE WINTER MORNING WALK. 191

Are gratified with mischief; and who spoil,
Because men suffer it, their toy the world.

When Babel was confounded, and the great
Confed'racy of projectors wild and vain
Was split into diversity of tongues,
Then, as a shepherd separates his flock,
These to the upland, to the valley those,
God drove asunder, and assign'd their lot
To all the nations. Ample was the boon
He gave them, in its distribution fair
And equal, and he bade them dwell in peace.
Peace was awhile their care: they plough'd and sow'd,
And reap'd their plenty without grudge or strife.
But violence can never longer sleep
Than human passions please. In ev'ry heart
Are sown the sparks that kindle fiery war;
Occasion needs but fan them, and they blaze.
Cain had already shed a brother's blood:
The deluge wash'd it out; but left unquench'd

The

The seeds of murder in the breast of man.
Soon, by a righteous judgment, in the line
Of his descending progeny was found
The first artificer of death ; the shrewd
Contriver who first sweated at the forge,
And forc'd the blunt and yet unbloodied steel
To a keen edge, and made it bright for war.
Him, Tubal nam'd, the Vulcan of old times,
The sword and faulchion their inventor claim,
And the first smith was the first murd'rer's son.
His art surviv'd the waters ; and ere long,
When man was multiplied and spread abroad
In tribes and clans, and had begun to call
These meadows and that range of hills his own,
The tasted sweets of property begat
Desire of more ; and industry in some
T' improve and cultivate their just demesne,
Made others covet what they saw so fair.
Thus war began on earth : these fought for spoil,
And those in self-defence. Savage at first,

The

Book v. THE WINTER MORNING WALK. 193

The onset, and irregular. At length
One eminent above the rest, for strength,
For stratagem, or courage, or for all,
Was chosen leader : him they serv'd in war,
And him in peace, for sake of warlike deeds
Rev'renc'd no less. Who could with him compare ?
Or who so worthy to controul themselves
As he whose prowess had subdu'd their foes ?
Thus war affording field for the display
Of virtue, made one chief, whom times of peace,
Which have their exigencies too, and call
For skill in government, at length made king.
King was a name too proud for man to wear
With modesty and meekness ; and the crown,
So dazzling in their eyes who set it on,
Was sure t' intoxicate the brows it bound.
It is the abject property of most,
That being parcel of the common mass,
And destitute of means to raise themselves,
They sink and settle lower than they need.

They know not what it is to feel within,
A comprehensive faculty; that grasps
Great purposes with ease, that turns and wields,
Almost without an effort, plans too vast
For their conception, which they cannot move.
Conscious of impotence, they soon grow drunk
With gazing, when they see an able man
Step forth to notice; and befotted thus,
Build him a pedestal, and say, Stand there,
And be our admiration and our praise.
They roll themselves before him in the dust,
Then most deserving in their own account
When most extravagant in his applause,
As if exalting him they rais'd themselves.
Thus by degrees, self-cheated of their sound
And sober judgment, that he is but man,
They demi-deify and fume him so,
That in due season he forgets it too.
Inflated and astrut with self-conceit,
He gulps the windy diet, and ere long,

Adopting

Book v. THE WINTER MORNING WALK. 195

Adopting their mistake, profoundly thinks
The world was made in vain, if not for him.
Thenceforth they are his cattle : drudges, born
To bear his burdens ; drawing in his gears
And sweating in his service, his caprice
Becomes the soul that animates them all.
He deems a thousand, or ten thousand lives,
Spent in the purchase of renown for him,
An easy reck'ning, and they think the same.
Thus kings were first invented, and thus kings
Were burnish'd into heroes, and became
The arbiters of this terraqueous swamp,
Storks among frogs, that have but croak'd and died.
Strange, that such folly as lifts bloated man
To eminence fit only for a god,
Should ever drivel out of human lips,
Ev'n in the cradled weakness of the world !
Still stranger much, that when at length mankind
Had reach'd the sinewy firmness of their youth,
And could discriminate and argue well

On subjects more mysterious, they were yet
Babes in the cause of freedom, and should fear
And quake before the gods themselves had made.
But above measure strange, that neither proof
Of sad experience, nor examples set
By some whose patriot virtue has prevail'd,
Can even now, when they are grown mature
In wisdom, and with philosophic deeps
Familiar, serve t' emancipate the rest!
Such dupes are men to custom, and so prone
To rev'rence what is ancient, and can plead
A course of long observance for its use,
That even servitude, the worst of ills,
Because deliver'd down from sire to son,
Is kept and guarded as a sacred thing.
But is it fit, or can it bear the shock
Of rational discussion, that a man,
Compounded and made up like other men
Of elements tumultuous, in whom lust
And folly in as ample measure meet

As

Book v. THE WINTER MORNING WALK. 197

As in the bosoms of the slaves he rules,
Should be a despot absolute, and boast
Himself the only freeman of his land ?
Should, when he pleases, and on whom he will
Wage war, with any or with no pretence
Of provocation giv'n or wrong sustain'd,
And force the beggarly last doit, by means
That his own humour dictates, from the clutch
Of poverty, that thus he may procure
His thousands, weary of penurious life,
A splendid opportunity to die ?
Say ye, who (with less prudence than of old
Jotham ascrib'd to his assembled trees
In politic convention) put your trust
I' th' shadow of a bramble, and reclin'd
In fancied peace beneath his dang'rous branch,
Rejoice in him, and celebrate his sway,
Where find ye passive fortitude ? Whence springs
Your self-denying zeal, that holds it good
To stroke the prickly grievance, and to hang

His thorns with streamers of continual praise ?

We too are friends to loyalty. We love

The king who loves the law ; respects his bounds,

And reigns content within them : him we serve

Freely and with delight, who leaves us free ;

But recollecting still that he is man,

We trust him not too far, King though he be,

And king in England too, he may be weak,

And vain enough to be ambitious still ;

May exercise amiss his proper pow'rs,

Or covet more than freemen chuse to grant :

Beyond that mark is treason. He is ours,

T' administer, to guard, t' adorn the state,

But not to warp or change it. We are his,

To serve him nobly in the common cause,

True to the death, but not to be his slaves.

Mark now the diff'rence, ye that boast your love

Of kings, between your loyalty and ours.

We love the man ; the paltry pageant you.

We the chief patron of the commonwealth ;

You

Book v. THE WINTER MORNING WALK. 199

You the regardless author of its woes.
We, for the sake of liberty, a king ;
You chains and bondage, for a tyrant's sake.
Our love is principle, and has its root
In reason, is judicious, manly, free ;
Yours, a blind instinct, crouches to the rod,
And licks the foot that treads it in the dust.
Were kingship as true treasure as it seems,
Sterling, and worthy of a wise man's wish,
I would not be a king to be belov'd
Causeless, and daub'd with undiscerning praise,
Where love is mere attachment to the throne,
Not to the man who fills it as he ought.

Whose freedom is by suff'rance, and at will
Of a superior, he is never free.
Who lives, and is not weary of a life
Expos'd to manacles, deserves them well,
The state that strives for liberty, though foil'd,
And forc'd t' abandon what she bravely fought,

Deserves at least applause for her attempt,
And pity for her loss. But that's a cause
Not often unsuccessful : pow'r usurp'd
Is weakness when oppos'd ; conscious of wrong,
'Tis pusillanimous and prone to flight.
But slaves that once conceive the glowing thought
Of freedom; in that hope itself possess
All that the contest calls for ; spirit, strength,
The scorn of danger, and united hearts,
The surest presage of the good they seek.*

Then shame to manhood, and opprobrious more
To France than all her losses and defeats,
Old or of later date, by sea or land,

* The author hopes that he shall not be censured for unnecessary warmth upon so interesting a subject. He is aware that it is become almost fashionable to stigmatize such sentiments as no better than empty declamation ; but it is an ill symptom, and peculiar to modern times.

Her

Her house of bondage, worse than that of old
Which God aveng'd on Pharaoh—the Bastile.
Ye horrid tow'rs, th' abode of broken hearts,
Ye dungeons and ye cages of despair,
That monarchs have supplied from age to age
With music such as suits their sov'reign ears,
The sighs and groans of miserable men !
There's not an English heart that would not leap
To hear that ye were fall'n at last ; to know
That ev'n our enemies, so oft employ'd
In forging chains for us, themselves were free.
For he who values liberty, confines
His zeal for her predominance within
No narrow bounds ; her cause engages him
Wherever pleaded. 'Tis the cause of man.
There dwell the most forlorn of human kind,
Immur'd though unaccus'd, condemn'd untry'd,
Cruelly spar'd, and hopeless of escape.
There, like the visionary emblem seen
By him of Babylon, life stands a stump,

And

And filletted about with hoops of brass,
Still lives, though all its pleasant boughs are gone.
To count the hour-bell and expect no change ;
And ever, as the fullen sound is heard,
Still to reflect, that though a joyless note
To him whose moments all have one dull pace,
Ten thousand rovers in the world at large
Account it music ; that it summons some
To theatre, or jocund feast or ball ;
The wearied hireling finds it a release
From labor ; and the lover, who has chid
Its long delay, feels ev'ry welcome stroke
Upon his heart-strings, trembling with delight—
To fly for refuge from distracting thought
To such amusements as ingenious woe
Contrives, hard-shifting, and without her tools—
To read engraven on the mouldy walls,
In stagg'ring types, his predecessor's tale,
A sad memorial, and subjoin his own—
To turn purveyor to an overgorg'd

And

Book v. THE WINTER MORNING WALK. 203

And bloated spider, till the pamper'd pest
Is made familiar, watches his approach,
Comes at his call, and serves him for a friend—
To wear out time in numb'ring to and fro
The studs that thick emboss his iron door,
Then downward and then upward, then assant
And then alternate, with a sickly hope
By dint of change to give his tasteless task
Some relish, till the fun exactly found
In all directions, he begins again—
Oh comfortless existence ! hemm'd around
With woes, which who that suffers would not kneel
And beg for exile, or the pangs of death ?
That man should thus encroach on fellow man,
Abridge him of his just and native rights,
Eradicate him, tear him from his hold
Upon th' endearments of domestic life
And social, nip his fruitfulness and use,
And doom him for perhaps an heedless word
To barrenness, and solitude, and tears,

Moves

Moves indignation ; makes the name of king
(Of king whom such prerogative can please)
As dreadful as the Manichean god,
Ador'd through fear, strong only to destroy.

'Tis liberty alone that gives the flow'r
Of fleeting life its lustre and perfume,
And we are weeds without it. All constraint,
Except what wisdom lays on evil men,
Is evil ; hurts the faculties, impedes
Their progress in the road of science ; blinds
The eyesight of discovery, and begets,
In those that suffer it, a sordid mind
Bestial, a meagre intellect, unfit
To be the tenant of man's noble form.
Thee therefore still, blame-worthy as thou art,
With all thy loss of empire, and though squeez'd
By public exigence till annual food
Fails for the craving hunger of the state,
Thee I account still happy, and the chief

Among

Book v. THE WINTER MORNING WALK. 205

Among the nations, seeing thou art free !
My native nook of earth ! thy clime is rude,
Replete with vapours, and disposes much
All hearts to sadness, and none more than mine ;
Thine unadulterate manners are less soft
And plausible than social life requires,
And thou hast need of discipline and art
To give thee what politer France receives
From Nature's bounty—that humane address
And sweetness, without which no pleasure is
In converse, either starv'd by cold reserve,
Or flush'd with fierce dispute, a senseless brawl ;
Yet being free, I love thee : for the sake
Of that one feature can be well content,
Disgrac'd as thou hast been, poor as thou art,
To seek no sublunary rest beside.
But once enslav'd, farewell ! I could endure
Chains no where patiently ; and chains at home,
Where I am free by birthright, not at all.
Then what were left of roughness in the grain

of

Of British natures, wanting its excuse
That it belongs to freemen, would disgust
And shock me. I should then, with double pain,
Feel all the rigor of thy fickle clime ;
And if I must bewail the blessing lost,
For which our Hampdens and our Sidney's bled,
I would at least bewail it under skies
Milder, among a people less austere,
In scenes which, having never known me free,
Would not reproach me with the loss I felt.
Do I forebode impossible events,
And tremble at vain dreams ? Heav'n grant I may !
But th' age of virtuous politics is past,
And we are deep in that of cold pretence.
Patriots are grown too shrewd to be sincere,
And we too wise to trust them. He that takes
Deep in his soft credulity the stamp
Design'd by loud declaimers on the part
Of liberty, themselves the slaves of lust,
Incurs derision for his easy faith.

Book v. THE WINTER MORNING WALK. 207

And lack of knowledge, and with cause enough :
For when was public virtue to be found
Where private was not ? Can he love the whole
Who loves no part ? He be a nation's friend,
Who is, in truth, the friend of no man there ?
Can he be strenuous in his country's cause,
Who flights the charities, for whose dear sake
That country, if at all, must be belov'd ?

'Tis therefore sober and good men are sad
For England's glory, seeing it wax pale
And sickly, while her champions wear their hearts
So loose to private duty, that no brain,
Healthful and undisturb'd by factious fumes,
Can dream them trusty to the gen'ral weal.
Such were not they of old, whose temper'd blades
Dispers'd the shackles of usurp'd controul,
And hew'd them link from link : then Albion's sons
Were sons indeed ; they felt a filial heart
Beat high within them at a mother's wrongs,
And, shining each in his domestic sphere,

Shone

Shone brighter still, once call'd to public view.
'Tis therefore many, whose sequester'd lot
Forbids their interference, looking on,
Anticipate perforce some dire event ;
And seeing the old castle of the state,
That promis'd once more firmness, so assail'd,
That all its tempest-beaten turrets shake,
Stand motionless, expectants of its fall.
All has its date below ; the fatal hour
Was register'd in heav'n ere time began.
We turn to dust, and all our mightiest works
Die too : the deep foundations that we lay,
Time ploughs them up, and not a trace remains.
We build with what we deem eternal rock ;
A distant age asks where the fabric stood,
And in the dust, sifted and search'd in vain,
The undiscoverable secret sleeps.

But there is yet a liberty unsung
By poets, and by senators unprais'd,

Book v. THE WINTER MORNING WALK. 209

Which monarchs cannot grant, nor all the powers
Of earth and hell confed'rate take away.

A liberty, which persecution, fraud,
Oppression, prisons, have no power to bind,
Which who so tastes can be enslav'd no more.

'Tis liberty of heart, derived from heav'n,
Bought with HIS blood who gave it to mankind,
And seal'd with the same token. It is held

By charter, and that charter sanction'd sure

By th' unimpeachable and awful oath

And promise of a God. His other gifts

All bear the royal stamp that speaks them his,

And are august, but this transcends them all.

His other works, this visible display

Of all-creating energy and might,

Are grand, no doubt, and worthy of the word

That, finding an interminable space

Unoccupied, has filled the void so well,

And made so sparkling what was dark before.

But these are not his glory. Man, 'tis true,

Smit with the beauty of so fair a scene,
Might well suppose th' artificer divine
Meant it eternal, had he not himself
Pronounc'd it transient, glorious as it is,
And still designing a more glorious far,
Doom'd it, as insufficient for his praise.
These therefore are occasional and pass;
Form'd for the confutation of the fool,
Whose lying heart disputes against a God;
That office serv'd, they must be swept away.
Not so the labours of his love: they shine
In other heav'ns than these that we behold,
And fade not. There is paradise that fears
No forfeiture, and of its fruits he sends
Large prelibation oft to saints below.
Of these the first in order, and the pledge
And confident assurance of the rest,
Is Liberty. A flight into his arms
Ere yet mortality's fine threads give way,

A clear

A clear escape from tyrannizing lust,
And full immunity from penal woe.

Chains are the portion of revolted man,
Stripes and a dungeon; and his body serves
The triple purpose. In that sickly, foul,
Opprobrious residence, he finds them all.
Propense his heart to idols, he is held
In silly dotage on created things,
Careless of their Creator. And that low
And fordid gravitation of his pow'rs
To a vile clod, so draws him, with such force
Resistless from the center he should seek,
That he at last forgets it. All his hopes
Tend downward, his ambition is to sink,
To reach a depth profounder still, and still
Profounder, in the fathomless abyss
Of folly, plunging in pursuit of death.
But ere he gain the comfortless repose
He seeks, and acquiescence of his soul

In heav'n-renouncing exile, he endures—

What does he not ? from lusts oppos'd in vain,
And self-reproaching conscience. He foresees

The fatal issue to his health, fame, peace,

Fortune and dignity ; the loss of all

That can ennoble man, and make frail life,

Short as it is, supportable. Still worse,

Far worse than all the plagues with which his sins

Infect his happiest moments, he forebodes

Ages of hopeless misery. Future death,

And death still future. Not an hasty stroke,

Like that which sends him to the dusty grave,

But unrepealable enduring death.

Scripture is still a trumpet to his fears :

What none can prove a forg'ry, may be true,

What none but bad men wish exploded, must.

That scruple checks him. Riot is not loud

Nor drunk enough to drown it. In the midst

Of laughter his compunctions are sincere,

And he abhors the jest by which he shines.

Remorse

Book v. THE WINTER MORNING WALK. 213

Remorse begets reform. His master-lust
Falls first before his resolute rebuke,
And seems dethron'd and vanquish'd. Peace ensues,
But spurious and short-liv'd, the puny child
Of self-congratulating pride, begot
On fancied Innocence. Again he falls,
And fights again ; but finds his best essay
A presage ominous, portending still
Its own dishonor by a worse relapse.
Till Nature, unavailing Nature, foil'd
So oft, and wearied in the vain attempt,
Scoffs at her own performance. Reason now
Takes part with appetite, and pleads the cause,
Perversely, which of late she so condemn'd ;
With shallow shifts and old devices, worn
And tatter'd in the service of debauch,
Cov'ring his shame from his offended sight.

“ Hath God indeed giv'n appetites to man,
“ And stor'd the earth so plenteously with means

- " To gratify the hunger of his wish,
" And doth he reprobate and will he damn
" The use of his own bounty ? making first
" So frail a kind, and then enacting laws
" So strict, that less than perfect must despair ?
" Falseness ! which whoso but suspects of truth,
" Dishonors God, and makes a slave of man.
" Do they themselves, who undertake for hire
" The teacher's office, and dispense at large
" Their weekly dole of edifying strains,
" Attend to their own music ? have they faith
" In what with such solemnity of tone
" And gesture they propound to our belief ?
" Nay—conduct hath the loudest tongue. The voice
" Is but an instrument on which the priest
" May play what tune he pleases. In the deed,
" The unequivocal authentic deed,
" We find sound argument, we read the heart."

Such reas'nings (if that name must needs belong
T' excuses in which reason has no part)

Serve

Book v. THE WINTER MORNING WALK. 215

Serve to compose a spirit well inclin'd
To live on terms of amity with vice,
And sin without disturbance. Often urg'd
(As often as libidinous discourse
Exhausted, he resorts to solemn themes
Of theological and grave import)
They gain at last his unreserv'd assent.
Till harden'd his heart's temper in the forge
Of lust, and on the anvil of despair,
He slights the strokes of conscience. Nothing moves,
Or nothing much, his constancy in ill,
Vain tamp'ring has but foster'd his disease,
'Tis desp'rate, and he sleeps the sleep of death,
Haste now, philosopher, and set him free.
Charm the deaf serpent wisely. Make him hear
Of rectitude and fitness; moral truth
How lovely, and the moral-sense how sure,
Consulted and obey'd, to guide his steps
Directly, to the FIRST AND ONLY FAIR.
Spare not in such a cause. Spend all the pow'rs

Of rant and rhapsody in virtue's praise:
 Be most sublimely good, verbosely grand,
 And with poetic trappings grace thy prose,
 Till it out-mantle all the pride of verse.—
 Ah, tinkling cymbal and high-sounding brass,
 Smitten in vain! such music cannot charm
 Th' eclipse that intercepts truth's heav'nly beam,
 And chills and darkens a wide-wand'ring soul.
 The still small voice is wanted. He must speak,
 Whose word leaps forth at once to its effect,
 Who calls for things that are not, and they come.

Grace makes the slave a freeman. 'Tis a change
 That turns to ridicule the turgid speech
 And stately tone of moralists, who boast,
 As if like him, of fabulous renown,
 They had indeed ability to smoothe
 The shag of savage nature, and were each
 An Orpheus, and omnipotent in song.
 But transformation of apostate man

From

Book v. THE WINTER MORNING WALK. 217

From fool to wife, from earthly to divine;
Is work for Him that made him. He alone,
And he by means in philosophic eyes
Trivial and worthy of disdain, achieves
The wonder; humanizing what is brute
In the lost kind, extracting from the lips
Of asps their venom, overpowering strength
By weakness, and hostility by love.

Patriots have toil'd, and in their country's cause
Bled nobly, and their deeds, as they deserve,
Receive proud recompence. We give in charge
Their names to the sweet lyre. Th' historic muse,
Proud of the treasure, marches with it down
To latest times; and sculpture, in her turn,
Gives bond in stone and ever-during brass
To guard them, and t' immortalize her trust.
But fairer wreaths are due, though never paid,
To those who, posted at the shrine of truth,
Have fall'n in her defence. A patriot's blood,

Well

Well spent in such a strife, may earn indeed
And for a time insure to his lov'd land
The sweets of liberty and equal laws ;
But martyrs struggle for a brighter prize,
And win it with more pain. Their blood is shed
In confirmation of the noblest claim,
Our claim to feed upon immortal truth,
To walk with God, to be divinely free,
To soar, and to anticipate the skies.
Yet few remember them. They liv'd unknown
Till persecution dragg'd them into fame,
And chas'd them up to heaven. Their ashes flew
—No marble tells us whither. With their names
No bard embalms and sanctifies his song ;
And History, so warm on meaner themes,
Is cold on this. She execrates indeed
The tyranny that doom'd them to the fire,
But gives the glorious sufferers little praise.*

* See Hume.

Book v. THE WINTER MORNING WALK. 219

He is the freeman whom the truth makes free,
And all are slaves beside. There's not a chain
That hellish foes, confed'rate for his harm,
Can wind around him, but he casts it off
With as much ease as Samson his green wyths.
He looks abroad into the varied field
Of Nature, and though poor perhaps, compar'd
With those whose mansions glitter in his sight,
Calls the delightful scen'ry all his own.
His are the mountains, and the vallies his,
And the resplendent rivers. His t' enjoy
With a propriety that none can feel,
But who, with filial confidence inspir'd,
Can lift to heav'n an unpresumptuous eye,
And smiling say — my Father made them all.
Are they not his by a peculiar right,
And by an emphasis of int'rest his,
Whose eye they fill with tears of holy joy,
Whose heart with praise, and whose exalted mind
With worthy thoughts of that unwearied love

That

That plann'd, and built, and still upholds a world
So cloath'd with beauty, for rebellious man ?
Yes—ye may fill your garner, ye that reap
The loaded soil, and ye may waste much good
In senseless riot ; but ye will not find
In feast or in the chace, in song or dance,
A liberty like his, who unimpeach'd
Of usurpation, and to no man's wrong,
Appropriates nature as his father's work,
And has a richer use of yours, than you.
He is indeed a freeman. Free by birth
Of no mean city, plann'd or 'ere the hills
Were built, the fountains open'd, or the sea
With all his roaring multitude of waves.
His freedom is the same in every state,
And no condition of this changeful life,
So manifold in cares, whose ev'ry day
Brings its own evil with it, makes it less :
For he has wings that neither sickness, pain,
Nor penury, can cripple or confine.

Book v. THE WINTER MORNING WALK. 221

No nook so narrow but he spreads them there
With ease, and is at large. Th' oppressor holds
His body bound, but knows not what a range
His spirit takes, unconscious of a chain ;
And that to bind him is a vain attempt
Whom God delights in, and in whom he dwells.

Acquaint thyself with God, if thou would'st taste
His works. Admitted once to his embrace,
Thou shalt perceive that thou wast blind before :
Thine eye shall be instructed, and thine heart,
Made pure, shall relish, with divine delight
'Till then unfelt, what hands divine have wrought.
Brutes graze the mountain-top, with faces prone
And eyes intent upon the scanty herb
It yields them, or recumbent on its brow,
Ruminate heedless of the scene outspread
Beneath, beyond, and stretching far away
From inland regions to the distant main.
Man views it and admires, but rests content

With

With what he views. The landscape has his praise,
But not its author. Unconcern'd who form'd
The paradise he sees, he finds it such,
And such well-pleas'd to find it, asks no more.
Not so the mind that has been touch'd from heav'n,
And in the school of sacred wisdom taught
To read his wonders, in whose thought the world,
Fair as it is, existed ere it was.

Not for its own sake merely, but for his
Much more who fashion'd it, he gives it praise ;
Praise that from earth resulting as it ought
To earth's acknowledg'd sov'reign, finds at once
Its only just proprietor in Him.

The soul that sees him, or receives sublim'd
New faculties, or learns at least t' employ
More worthily the pow'rs she own'd before ;
Discerns in all things, what with stupid gaze
Of ignorance till then she overlook'd,
A ray of heav'nly light gilding all forms
Terrestrial in the vast and the minute,

The

Book v. THE WINTER MORNING WALK. 223

The unambiguous footsteps of the God
Who gives its lustre to an insect's wing,
And wheels his throne upon the rolling worlds.
Much conversant with heav'n, she often holds
With those fair ministers of light to man,
That fill the skies nightly with silent pomp,
Sweet conference. Enquires what strains were they
With which heav'n rang, when ev'ry star, in haste
To gratulate the new-created earth,
Sent forth a voice, and all the sons of God
Shouted for joy.—“ Tell me, ye shining hosts
“ That navigate a sea that knows no storms,
“ Beneath a vault unfullied with a cloud,
“ If from your elevation, whence ye view
“ Distinctly, scenes invisible to man,
“ And systems of whose birth no tidings yet
“ Have reach'd this nether world, ye spy a race
“ Favor'd as our's, transgressors from the womb,
“ And hasting to a grave, yet doom'd to rise,
“ And to possess a brighter heav'n than yours ?

“ As one who long detain’d on foreign shores
“ Pants to return, and when he sees afar
“ His country’s weather-bleach’d and batter’d rocks,
“ From the green wave emerging, darts an eye
“ Radiant with joy towards the happy land ;
“ So I with animated hopes behold,
“ And many an aching wish, your beamy fires,
“ That shew like beacons in the blue abyss,
“ Ordain’d to guide th’ embodied spirit home,
“ From toilsome life to never-ending rest.
“ Love kindles as I gaze. I feel desires
“ That give assurance of their own success,
“ And that infus’d from heav’n must thither tend.”

So reads he nature whom the lamp of truth
Illuminates. Thy lamp, mysterious word !
Which who so sees, no longer wanders lost,
With intellects bemaz’d in endless doubt,
But runs the road of wisdom. Thou hast built,
With means that were not ’till by thee employ’d,
Worlds

Book v. THE WINTER MORNING WALK. 225

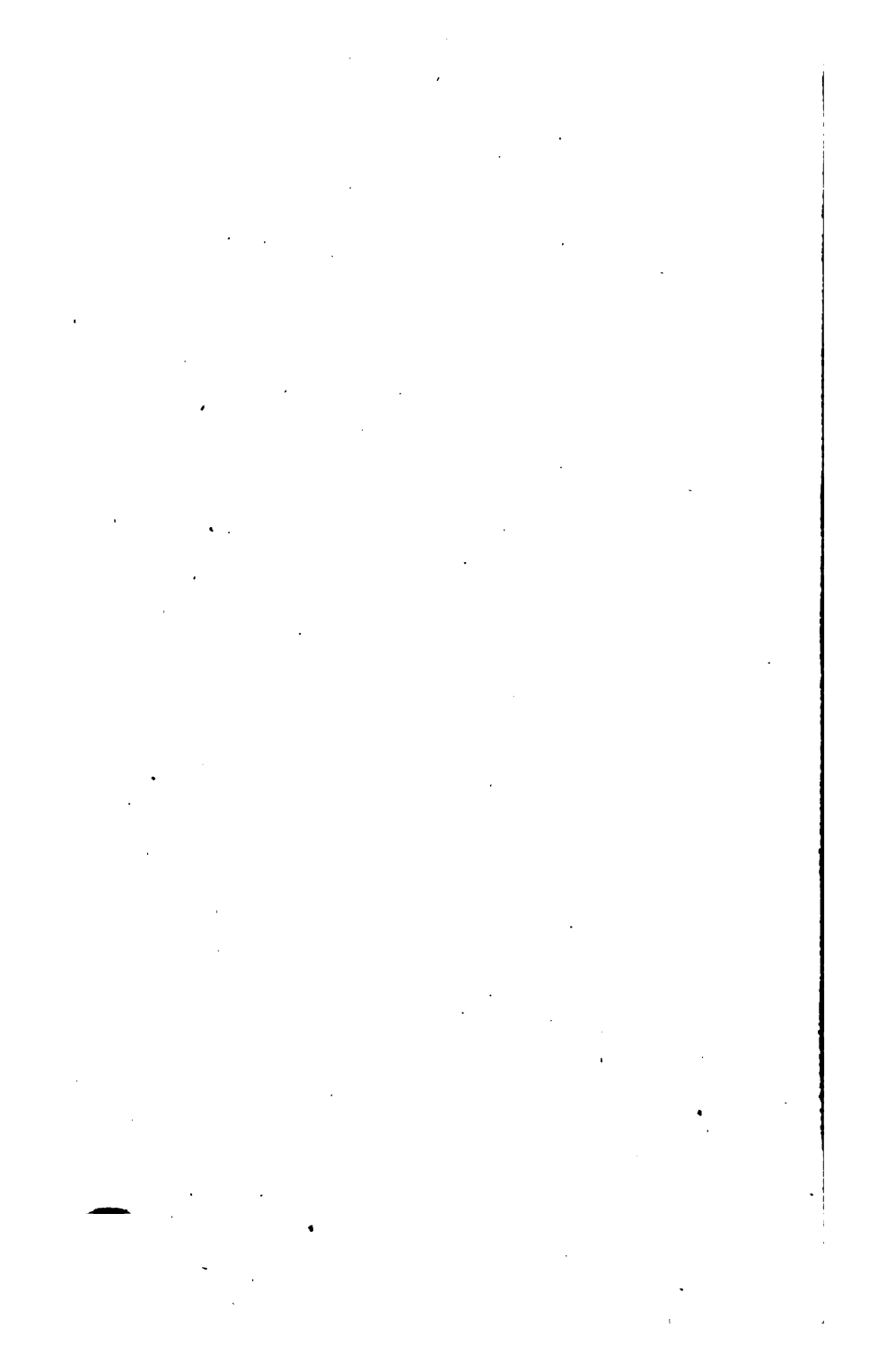
Worlds that had never been hadst thou in strength
Been less, or less benevolent than strong.
They are thy witnesses, who speak thy pow'r
And goodness infinite, but speak in ears
That hear not, or receive not their report.
In vain thy creatures testify of thee
'Till thou proclaim thyself. Their's is indeed
A teaching voice; but 'tis the praise of thine
That whom it teaches it makes prompt to learn,
And with the boon gives talents for its use.
'Till thou art heard, imaginations vain
Possess the heart, and fables false as hell;
Yet deem'd oracular, lure down to death
The uninform'd and heedless souls of men.
We give to chance, blind chance, ourselves as blind,
The glory of thy work, which yet appears
Perfect and unimpeachable of blame,
Challenging human scrutiny, and prov'd
Then skilful most when most severely judg'd.
But chance is not; or is not where thou reign'st:

Thy providence forbids that fickle pow'r
(If pow'r she be that works but to confound)
To mix her wild vagaries with thy laws.
Yet thus we doat, refusing while we can
Instruction, and inventing to ourselves,
Gods such as guilt makes welcome, Gods that sleep,
Or disregard our follies, or that sit
Amus'd spectators of this bustling stage.
Thee we reject, unable to abide
Thy purity, 'till pure as thou art pure,
Made such by thee, we love thee for that cause
For which we shunn'd and hated thee before.
Then we are free. Then liberty like day
Breaks on the soul, and by a flash from heav'n
Fires all the faculties with glorious joy.
A voice is heard that mortal ears hear not
'Till thou hast touch'd them; 'tis the voice of song,
A loud Hosanna sent from all thy works,
Which he that hears it with a shout repeats,
And adds his rapture to the gen'ral praise.

In

Book V. THE WINTER MORNING WALK. 227

In that blest moment, nature throwing wide
Her veil opaque, discloses with a smile
The Author of her beauties, who, retir'd
Behind his own creation, works unseen
By the impure, and hears his pow'r deny'd.
Thou art the source and centre of all minds,
Their only point of rest, eternal Word !
From thee departing, they are lost and rove
At random, without honor, hope, or peace.
From thee is all that soothes the life of man,
His high endeavour, and his glad success,
His strength to suffer and his will to serve.
But oh thou bounteous giver of all good,
Thou art of all thy gifts thyself the crown !
Give what thou can'st, without thee we are poor ;
And with thee rich, take what thou wilt away.



THE
T A S K.

BOOK VI.

ARGUMENT of the SIXTH BOOK.

*Bells at a distance.—Their effect.—A fine noon in winter.
—A sheltered walk.—Meditation better than books.—
Our familiarity with the course of nature makes it appear less wonderful than it is.—The transformation that spring effects in a shrubbery described.—A mistake concerning the course of nature corrected.—God maintains it by an unremitted act.—The amusements fashionable at this hour of the day reprov'd.—Animals happy, a delightful sight.—Origin of cruelty to animals.—That it is a great crime proved from scripture.—That proof illustrated by a tale.—A line drawn between the lawful and unlawful destruction of them.—Their good and useful properties insisted on.—Apology for the encomiums bestowed by the author on animals.—Instances of man's extravagant praise of man.—The groans of the creation shall have an end.—A view taken of the restoration of all things.—An Invocation and an Invitation of him who shall bring it to pass.—The retired man vindicated from the charge of uselessness.—Conclusion.*

T H E
T A S K.

B O O K VI.

THE WINTER WALK AT NOON.

T H E R E is in souls a sympathy with sounds,
And as the mind is pitch'd the ear is pleas'd
With melting airs or martial, brisk or grave.
Some chord in unison with what we hear
Is touch'd within us, and the heart replies.
How soft the music of those village bells
Falling at intervals upon the ear
In cadence sweet ! now dying all away,
Now pealing loud again and louder still,
Clear and sonorous, as the gale comes on.
With easy force it opens all the cells

Where mem'ry slept. Wherever I have heard
A kindred melody, the scene recurs,
And with it all its pleasures and its pains.
Such comprehensive views the spirit takes,
That in a few short moments I retrace
(As in a map the voyager his course)
The windings of my way through many years.
Short as in retrospect the journey seems,
It seem'd not always short ; the rugged path,
And prospect oft so dreary and forlorn,
Mov'd many a sigh at its disheart'ning length.
Yet feeling present evils, while the past
Faintly impress the mind, or not at all,
How readily we wish time spent revok'd,
That we might try the ground again, where once
(Through inexperience as we now perceive)
We miss'd that happiness we might have found !
Some friend is gone, perhaps his son's best friend,
A father, whose authority, in show

When

Book vi. THE WINTER WALK AT NOON. 233

When most severe, and must'ring all its force,
Was but the graver countenance of love ;
Whose favour, like the clouds of spring, might low'r,
And utter now and then an awful voice,
But had a blessing in its darkest frown,
Threat'ning at once and nourishing the plant.
We lov'd, but not enough, the gentle hand
That rear'd us. At a thoughtless age, allur'd
By ev'ry gilded folly, we renounc'd
His shelt'ring side, and wilfully forewent
That converse which we now in vain regret.
How gladly would the man recall to life
The boy's neglected fire ! a mother too,
That softer friend, perhaps more gladly still,
Might he demand them at the gates of death.
Sorrow has, since they went, subdu'd and tam'd
The playful humour ; he could now endure,
(Himself grown sober in the vale of tears)
And feel a parent's presence no restraint.
But not to understand a treasure's worth

'Till

'Till time has stol'n away the flighted good,
Is cause of half the poverty we feel,
And makes the world the wilderness it is.
The few that pray at all pray oft amiss,
And, seeking grace t' improve the prize they hold,
Would urge a wiser suit than asking more.

The night was winter in his roughest mood,
The morning sharp and clear. But now at noon
Upon the southern side of the slant hills,
And where the woods fence off the northern blast,
The season smiles, resigning all its rage,
And has the warmth of May. The vault is blue
Without a cloud, and white without a speck
The dazzling splendour of the scene below.
Again the harmony comes o'er the vale,
And through the trees I view th' embattled tow'r
Whence all the music. I again perceive
The soothing influence of the wafted strains,
And settle in soft musings as I tread

Book vi. THE WINTER WALK AT NOON. 235

The walk still verdant, under oaks and elms,
Whose outspread branches overarch the glade.
The roof, though moveable through all its length
As the wind sways it, has yet well suffic'd,
And intercepting in their silent fall
The frequent flakes, has kept a path for me.
No noise is here, or none that hinders thought.
The red-breast warbles still, but is content
With slender notes and more than half suppress'd :
Pleas'd with his solitude, and sitting light
From spray to spray, where'er he rests he shakes
From many a twig the pendent drops of ice,
That tinkle in the wither'd leaves below.
Stillness, accompanied with sounds so soft,
Charms more than silence. Meditation here
May think down hours to moments. Here the heart
May give an useful lesson to the head,
And learning, wiser grow without his books.
Knowledge and wisdom, far from being one,
Have oft-times no connexion. Knowledge dwells

In

In heads replete with thoughts of other men,
Wisdom in minds attentive to their own.
Knowledge, a rude unprofitable mass,
The mere materials with which wisdom builds,
'Till smooth'd and squar'd and fitted to its place,
Does but incumber whom it seems t' enrich.
Knowledge is proud that he has learn'd so much,
Wisdom is humble that he knows no more.
Books are not seldom talismans and spells,
By which the magic art of shrewder wits
Holds an unthinking multitude enthral'd.
Some, to the fascination of a name
Surrender judgment, hood-wink'd. Some, the style
Infatuates, and through labyrinths and wilds
Of error leads them, by a tune entranc'd.
While sloth seduces more, too weak to bear
The insupportable fatigue of thought,
And swallowing, therefore, without pause or choice,
The total grist unsifted, husks and all.
But trees, and rivulets whose rapid course

Book vi. THE WINTER WALK AT NOON. 237

Defies the check of winter, haunts of deer,
And sheep-walks, populous with bleating lambs,
And lanes, in which the primrose ere her time
Peeps through the moss that cloaths the hawthorn root,
Deceive no student. Wisdom there, and truth,
Not shy, as in the world, and to be won
By slow solicitation, seize at once
The roving thought, and fix it on themselves.

What prodigies can pow'r divine perform
More grand than it produces year by year,
And all in sight of inattentive man?
Familiar with th' effect we slight the cause,
And, in the constancy of nature's course,
The regular return of genial months,
And renovation of a faded world,
See nought to wonder at. Should God again,
As once in Gibeon, interrupt the race
Of the undeviating and punctual sun,
How would the world admire! but speaks it less

An

An agency divine, to make him know
His moment when to sink and when to rise,
Age after age, than to arrest his course ?
All we behold is miracle, but seen
So duly, all is miracle in vain.
Where now the vital energy that mov'd,
While summer was, the pure and subtle lymph
Through th' imperceptible meandering veins
Of leaf and flow'r ? It sleeps ; and th' icy touch
Of unprolific winter has impress'd
A cold stagnation on th' intestine tide.
But let the months go round, a few short months,
And all shall be restor'd. These naked shoots,
Barren as lances, among which the wind
Makes wintry music, fighting as it goes,
Shall put their graceful foliage on again,
And more aspiring, and with ampler spread,
Shall boast new charms, and more than they have lost.
Then, each in its peculiar honors clad,
Shall publish, even to the distant eye,

Its

Book vi. THE WINTER WALK AT NOON. 239

Its family and tribe. Laburnum rich
In streaming gold ; fyinga iv'ry pure ;
The scented and the scentless rose, this red
And of an humbler growth, the * other tall,
And throwing up into the darkest gloom
Of neighb'ring cypress, or more sable yew,
Her silver globes, light as the foamy surf
That the wind severs from the broken wave ;
The lilac, various in array, now white,
Now sanguine, and her beauteous head now set
With purple spikes pyramidal, as if
Studious of ornament, yet unresolv'd
Which hue she most approv'd, she chose them all ;
Copious of flow'rs the woodbine, pale and wan,
But well compensating her sickly looks
With never-cloying odours, early and late ;
Hypericum all bloom, so thick a swarm
Of flow'rs, like flies cloathing her slender rods,
That scarce a leaf appears ; mezerion too,
Though leafless, well attir'd, and thick beset

With

* The Guelder-rose.

With blushing wreaths, investing ev'ry spray;
Althæa with the purple eye; the broom,
Yellow and bright, as bullion unalloy'd,
Her blossoms; and luxuriant above all
The jasmine, throwing wide her elegant sweets,
The deep dark green of whose unvarnish'd leaf
Makes more conspicuous, and illumines more
The bright profusion of her scatter'd stars.—
These have been, and these shall be in their day,
And all this uniform, uncolour'd scene,
Shall be dismantled of its fleecy load,
And flush into variety again.
From dearth to plenty, and from death to life,
Is Nature's progress when she lectures man
In heav'nly truth; evincing, as she makes
The grand transition, that there lives and works
A soul in all things, and that soul is God.
The beauties of the wilderness are his,
That make so gay the solitary place
Where no eye sees them. And the fairer forms

That

That cultivation glories in, are his.
 He sets the bright procession on its way,
 And marshals all the order of the year;
 He marks the bounds which winter may not pass,
 And blunts his pointed fury: in its case,
 Ruffet and rude, folds up the tender germ
 Uninjur'd, with inimitable art,
 And, ere one flow'ry season fades and dies,
 Designs the blooming wonders of the next.

Some say that, in the origin of things,
 When all creation started into birth,
 The infant elements receiv'd a law
 From which they swerve not since. That under force
 Of that controuling ordinance they move,
 And need not his immediate hand, who first
 Prescrib'd their course, to regulate it now.
 Thus dream they, and contrive to save a God
 Th' incumbrance of his own concerns, and spare
 The great Artificer of all that moves

The stress of a continual act, the pain
Of unremitted vigilance and care,
As too laborious and severe a task.

So man, the moth, is not afraid, it seems,
To span Omnipotence, and measure might
That knows no measure, by the scanty rule
And standard of his own, that is to-day,
And is not ere to-morrow's sun go down.

But how should matter occupy a charge
Dull as it is, and satisfy a law
So vast in its demands, unless impell'd
To ceaseless service by a ceaseless force,
And under pressure of some conscious cause?
The Lord of all, himself through all diffus'd,
Sustains, and is the life of all that lives.

Nature is but a name for an effect
Whose cause is God. He feeds the secret fire
By which the mighty process is maintain'd,
Who sleeps not, is not weary; in whose sight
Slow-circling ages are as transient days;

Whose

Book vi. THE WINTER WALK AT NOON. 243

Whose work is without labor, whose designs
No flaw deforms, no difficulty thwarts,
And whose beneficence no charge exhausts.
Him blind antiquity profan'd, not serv'd,
With self-taught rites, and under various names,
Female and male, Pomona, Pales, Pan,
And Flora and Vertumnus; peopling earth
With tutelary goddesses and gods
That were not, and commending as they would
To each some province, garden, field, or grove.
But all are under one. One spirit—His
Who wore the platted thorns with bleeding brows,
Rules universal nature. Not a flow'r
But shows some touch in freckle, streak or stain;
Of his unrivall'd pencil. He inspires
Their balmy odors and imparts their hues,
And bathes their eyes with nectar, and includes,
In grains as countless as the sea-side sands,
The forms with which he sprinkles all the earth.
Happy who walks with him! whom what he finds

Of flavour or of scent in fruit or flow'r,
 Or what he views of beautiful or grand
 In nature, from the broad majestic oak
 To the green blade that twinkles in the sun,
 Prompts with remembrance of a present God.
 His presence, who made all so fair, perceiv'd,
 Makes all still fairer. As with him no scene
 Is dreary, so with him all seasons please.
 Though winter had been none, had man been true,
 And earth be punished for its tenant's sake,
 Yet not in vengeance; as this smiling sky,
 So soon succeeding such an angry night,
 And these dissolving snows, and this clear stream
 Recov'ring fast its liquid music, prove.

Who then, that has a mind well strung and tun'd
 To contemplation, and within his reach
 A scene so friendly to his fav'rite task,
 Would waste attention at the chequer'd board,
 His host of wooden warriors to and fro

Marching

Marching and counter-marching, with an eye
 As fixt as marble, with a forehead ridg'd
 And furrow'd into storms, and with a hand
 Trembling, as if eternity were hung
 In balance on his conduct of a pin
 Nor envies he aught more their idle sport,
 Who pant with application misapplied
 To trivial toys; and, pushing iv'ry balls
 Across the velvet level, feel a joy
 Akin to rapture, when the bawble finds
 Its destin'd goal, of difficult access.
 Nor deems he wiser him, who gives his noon
 To Miss, the Mercer's plague, from shop to shop
 Wand'ring, and litt'ring with unfolded silks
 The polish'd counter, and approving none,
 Or promising with smiles to call again.
 Nor him, who by his vanity seduc'd,
 And sooth'd into a dream that he discerns
 The difference of a Guido from a daub,
 Frequents the crowded auction. Station'd there

As duly as the Langford of the show,
With glafs at eye, and catalogue in hand,
And tongue accomplish'd in the fulsome cant
And pedantry that coxeombs learn with ease;
Oft as the price-deciding hammer falls
He notes it in his book, then raps his box,
Swears 'tis a bargain, rails at his hard fate
That he has let it pass—but never bids.

Here, unmolested, through whatever sign
The fun proceeds, I wander. Neither mist,
Nor freezing sky, nor sultry, checking me,
Nor stranger intermeddling with my joy,
Ev'n in the spring and play-time of the year,
That calls th' unwonted villager abroad
With all her little ones, a sportive train,
To gather king-cups in the yellow mead,
And prink their hair with daisies, or to pick
A cheap but wholesome sallad from the brook,
These shades are all my own. The tim'rous hare,

Book vi. THE WINTER WALK AT NOON. 247

Grown so familiar with her frequent guest,
Scarce shuns me; and the Rock-dove, unalarm'd,
Sits cooing in the pine-tree, nor suspends
His long love-ditty for my near approach.
Drawn from his refuge in some lonely elm
That age or injury has hollow'd deep,
Where, on his bed of wool and matted leaves,
He has outslept the winter, ventures forth
To frisk awhile, and bask in the warm sun,
The squirrel, flippant, pert, and full of play:
He sees me, and at once, swift as a bird,
Ascends the neighb'ring beach; there whisks his brush,
And perks his ears, and stamps and scolds aloud,
With all the prettiness of feign'd alarm,
And anger insignificantly fierce.

The heart is hard in nature, and unfit
For human fellowship, as being void
Of sympathy, and therefore dead alike
To love and friendship both, that is not pleas'd

With sight of animals enjoying life,
Nor feels their happiness augment his own.
The bounding fawn, that darts across the glade
When none pursues, through mere delight of heart,
And spirits buoyant with excess of glee;
The horse as wanton, and almost as fleet,
That skims the spacious meadow at full speed,
Then stops and snorts, and, throwing high his heels,
Starts to the voluntary race again;
The very kine that gambol at high noon,
The total herd receiving first from one
That leads the dance a summons to be gay,
Though wild their strange vagaries, and uncouth
Their efforts, yet resolv'd with one consent
To give such act and utterance as they may
To extasy too big to be suppress'd—
These, and a thousand images of bliss,
With which kind nature graces ev'ry scene,
Where cruel man defeats not her design,
Impart to the benevolent, who wish

All that are capable of pleasure, pleas'd,
A far superior happiness to theirs,
The comfort of a reasonable joy.

Man scarce had ris'n, obedient to his call
Who form'd him from the dust, his future grave,
When he was crown'd as never king was since.
God set the diadem upon his head,
And angel choirs attended. Wond'ring stood
The new-made monarch, while before him pass'd,
All happy, and all perfect in their kind,
The creatures, summon'd from their various haunts
To see their sov'reign, and confess his sway :
Vast was his empire, absolute his pow'r,
Or bounded only by a law whose force
'Twas his sublimest privilege to feel
And own, the law of universal love.
He rul'd with meekness, they obey'd with joy;
No cruel purpose lurk'd within his heart,
And no distrust of his intent in theirs.

So Eden was a scene of harmless sport,
Where kindness on his part who rul'd the whole
Begot a tranquil confidence in all,
And fear as yet was not, nor cause for fear.
But sin marr'd all ; and the revolt of man,
That source of evils, not exhausted yet,
Was punish'd with revolt of his from him.
Garden of God, how terrible the change
Thy groves and lawns then witness'd ! ev'ry heart,
Each animal of ev'ry name, conceiv'd
A jealousy and an instinctive fear,
And, conscious of some danger, either fled
Precipitate the loath'd abode of man,
Or growl'd defiance in such angry fort,
As taught him too to tremble in his turn.
Thus harmony and family accord
Were driv'n from Paradise ; and in that hour
The seeds of cruelty, that since have swell'd
To such gigantic and enormous growth,
Were sown in human nature's fruitful soil.

Hence

Book vi. THE WINTER WALK AT NOON. 251

Hence date the persecution and the pain
That man inflicts on all inferior kinds,
Regardless of their plaints. To make him sport,
To gratify the frenzy of his wrath,
Or his base gluttony, are causes good
And just, in his account, why bird and beast
Should suffer torture, and the streams be dy'd
With blood of their inhabitants impal'd.
Earth groans beneath the burden of a war
Wag'd with defenceless innocence, while he,
Not satisfied to prey on all around,
Adds tenfold bitterness to death, by pangs
Needless, and first torments ere he devours.
Now happiest they that occupy the scenes
The most remote from his abhorr'd resort,
Whom once, as delegate of God on earth,
They fear'd, and, as his perfect image, lov'd.
The wilderness is theirs, with all its caves,
Its hollow glens, its thickets, and its plains
Unvisited by man. There they are free,

And

And howl and roar as likes them, uncontroll'd,
Nor ask his leave to slumber or to play.
Woe to the tyrant, if he dare intrude
Within the confines of their wild domain :
The lion tells him—I am monarch here—
And if he spare him, spares him on the terms
Of royal mercy, and through gen'rous scorn
To rend a victim trembling at his foot.
In measure, as by force of instinct drawn,
Or by necessity constrain'd, they live
Dependent upon man ; those in his fields,
These at his crib, and some beneath his roof ;
They prove too often at how dear a rate
He sells protection. Witness, at his foot
The spaniel dying for some venial fault,
Under dissection of the knotted scourge ;
Witness, the patient ox, with stripes and yells
Driv'n to the slaughter, goaded, as he runs,
To madness, while the savage at his heels
Laughs at the frantic sufferer's fury spent

Upon

Upon the guiltless passenger o'erthrown.
He too is witness, noblest of the train
That wait on man, the flight-performing horse :
With unsuspecting readiness he takes
His murd'rer on his back, and, push'd all day,
With bleeding sides, and flanks that heave for life,
To the far-distant goal, arrives and dies.
So little mercy shows who needs so much !
Does law, so jealous in the cause of man,
Denounce no doom on the delinquent ? None.
He lives, and o'er his brimming beaker boasts
(As if barbarity were high desert)
Th' inglorious feat, and, clamorous in praise
Of the poor brute, seems wisely to suppose
The honors of his matchless horse his own.
But many a crime, deem'd innocent on earth,
Is register'd in heav'n, and these, no doubt,
Have each their record, with a curse annex.
Man may dismiss compassion from his heart,
But God will never. When he charg'd the Jew
T' assist

T' assist his foe's down-fallen beast to rise ;
And when the bush-exploring boy that seiz'd
The young, to let the parent bird go free ;
Prov'd he not plainly that his meaner works
Are yet his care, and have an int'rest all,
All, in the universal Father's love ?
On Noah, and in him on all mankind,
The charter was conferr'd, by which we hold
The flesh of animals in fee, and claim
O'er all we feed on pow'r of life and death.
But read the instrument, and mark it well :
Th' oppression of a tyrannous controul
Can find no warrant there. Feed then, and yield
Thanks for thy food. Carnivorous, through sin,
Feed on the slain, but spare the living brute.

The Governor of all, himself to all
So bountiful, in whose attentive ear
The unfledg'd raven and the lion's whelp,
Plead not in vain for pity on the pangs

Of

Book vi. THE WINTER WALK AT NOON. 255

Of hunger unassuag'd, has interpos'd,
Not seldom, his avenging arm, to smite
Th' injurious trampler upon nature's law,
That claims forbearance even for a brute.
He hates the hardness of a Balaam's heart ;
And, prophet as he was, he might not strike
The blameless animal, without rebuke,
On which he rode. Her opportune offence
Sav'd him, or th' unrelenting fear had died.
He sees that human equity is slack
To interfere, though in so just a cause,
And makes the task his own. Inspiring dumb
And helpless victims with a sense so keen
Of injury, with such knowledge of their strength,
And such sagacity to take revenge,
That oft the beast has seem'd to judge the man.
An ancient, not a legendary tale,
By one of sound intelligence rehears'd
(If such, who plead for Providence, may seem
In modern eyes) shall make the doctrine clear:

Where

Where England, stretch'd towards the setting sun,
Narrow and long, o'erlooks the western wave,
Dwelt young Misagathus ; a scorner he
Of God and goodness, atheist in ostent,
Vicious in act, in temper savage-fierce :
He journey'd ; and his chance was as he went
To join a traveller, of far diff'rent note,
Evander, fam'd for piety, for years
Deserving honor, but for wisdom more.
Fame had not left the venerable man
A stranger to the manners of the youth,
Whose face too was familiar to his view.
Their way was on the margin of the land,
O'er the green summit of the rocks, whose base
Beats back the roaring surge, scarce heard so high.
The charity that warm'd his heart was mov'd
At sight of the man-monster. With a smile
Gentle, and affable, and full of grace,
As fearful of offending whom he wish'd
Much to persuade, he plied his ear with truths

Not

Book vi. THE WINTER WALK AT NOON. 257

Not harshly thunder'd forth or rudely press'd,
But, like his purpose, gracious, kind, and sweet.
And dost thou dream, th' impenetrable man
Exclaim'd, that me, the lullabies of age,
And fantasies of dotards, such as thou,
Can cheat, or move a moment's fear in me?
Mark now the proof I give thee, that the brave
Need no such aids as superstition lends,
To steel their hearts against the dread of death.
He spoke, and to the precipice at hand
Push'd with a madman's fury. Fancy shrinks,
And the blood thrills and curdles, at the thought
Of such a gulph as he design'd his grave.
But though the felon on his back could dare
The dreadful leap, more rational his steed
Declin'd the death, and wheeling swiftly round,
Or e'er his hoof had press'd the crumbling verge,
Baffled his rider, sav'd against his will.
The frenzy of the brain may be redress'd
By med'cine well applied, but without grace

The heart's infanity admits no cure.

Enrag'd the more, by what might have reform'd

His horrible intent, again he fought

Deſtruction, with a zeal to be deſtroy'd,

With ſounding whip and rowels dy'd in blood.

But ſtill in vain. The Providence that meant

A longer date to the far nobler beaſt,

Spar'd yet again th' ignobler for his ſake.

And now, his prowels prov'd, and his ſincere

Incurable obduracy evinc'd,

His rage grew cool; and, pleas'd perhaps t' have earn'd

So cheaply the renown of that attempt,

With looks of ſome complacence he reſum'd

His road, deriding much the blank amaze

Of good Evander, ſtill where he was left

Fixt motionleſs, and petrified with dread.

So on they far'd; diſcourſe on other themes

Enſuing, ſeem'd to obliterate the paſt,

And tamer far for ſo much fury ſhown,

(As is the courſe of raſh and fiery men)

Book vi. THE WINTER WALK AT NOON. 259

The rude companion smil'd, as if transform'd.
But 'twas a transient calm. A storm was near,
An unsuspected storm. His hour was come.
The impious challenger of Pow'r divine
Was now to learn, that Heav'n, though slow to wrath,
Is never with impunity defied.
His horse, as he had caught his master's mood,
Snorting, and starting into sudden rage,
Unbidden, and not now to be controul'd,
Rush'd to the cliff, and having reach'd it, stood.
At once the shock unseated him : he flew
Sheer o'er the craggy barrier, and immers'd
Deep in the flood, found, when he sought it not,
The death he had deserv'd, and died alone.
So God wrought double justice ; made the fool
The victim of his own tremendous choice,
And taught a brute the way to safe revenge.

I would not enter on my list of friends
(Though grac'd with polish'd manners and fine sense,

Yet wanting fenfibility) the man
Who needlessly fets foot upon a worm.
An inadvertent ftep may crush the fnail
That crawls at evening in the public path ;
But he that has humanity, forewarn'd,
Will tread afide, and let the reptile live.
The creeping vermin, loathfome to the fight,
And charg'd perhaps with venom, that intrudes,
A vifitor unwelcome, into fcenes
Sacred to neatnefs and repoſe, th' alcove,
The chamber, or refectory, may die :
A neceffary act incurs no blame.
Not fo, when held within their proper bounds,
And guiltlefs of offence, they range the air,
Or take their paftime in the fpacious field :
There they are privileg'd ; and he that hunts
Or harms them there, is guilty of a wrong,
Disturbs th' œconomy of nature's realm,
Who, when ſhe form'd, deſign'd them an abode.
The ſum is this : If man's convenience, health,

Or

Book vi. THE WINTER WALK AT NOON. 261

Or safety interfere, his rights and claims
Are paramount, and must extinguish theirs.
Else they are all—the meanest things that are,
As free to live, and to enjoy that life,
As God was free to form them at the first,
Who, in his sov'reign wisdom, made them all.
Ye therefore who love mercy, teach your sons
To love it too. The spring-time of our years
Is soon dishonour'd and defil'd in most
By budding ills, that ask a prudent hand
To check them. But, alas ! none sooner shoots,
If unrestrain'd, into luxuriant growth,
Than cruelty, most dev'lish of them all.
Mercy to him that shows it, is the rule
And righteous limitation of its act,
By which Heav'n moves in pard'ning guilty man ;
And he that shows none, being ripe in years,
And conscious of the outrage he commits,
Shall seek it, and not find it in his turn.

Distinguish'd much by reason, and still more
By our capacity of grace divine,
From creatures that exist but for our sake,
Which having serv'd us, perish, we are held
Accountable, and God, some future day,
Will reckon with us roundly for th' abuse
Of what he deems no mean or trivial trust,
Superior as we are, they yet depend
Not more on human help, than we on theirs.
Their strength, or speed, or vigilance, were giv'n
In aid of our defects. In some are found
Such teachable and apprehensive parts,
That man's attainments in his own concerns,
Match'd with th' expertness of the brutes in theirs,
Are oft-times vanquish'd and thrown far behind,
Some show that nice sagacity of smell,
And read with such discernment, in the port
And figure of the man, his secret aim,
That oft we owe our safety to a skill
We could not teach, and must despair to learn.

But

Book vi. THE WINTER WALK AT NOON. 262

But learn we might, if not too proud to stoop
To quadrupede instructors, many a good
And useful quality, and virtue too,
Rarely exemplified among ourselves.
Attachment never to be wean'd, or chang'd
By any change of fortune ; proof alike
Against unkindness, absence, and neglect ;
Fidelity, that neither bribe nor threat
Can move or warp ; and gratitude for small
And trivial favors, lasting as the life,
And glist'ning even in the dying eye.

Man praises man. Desert in arts or arms
Wins public honor ; and ten thousand fit
Patiently present at a sacred song,
Commemoration-mad ; content to hear
(Oh wonderful effect of music's pow'r !)
Messiah's eulogy, for Handel's sake.
But less, methinks, than sacrilege might serve—
(For was it less, what heathen would have dar'd

To strip Jove's statue of his oaken wreath,
And hang it up in honor of a man ?)
Much less might serve, when all that we design
Is but to gratify an itching ear,
And give the day to a musician's praise.
Remember Handel ? Who that was not born
Deaf as the dead to harmony, forgets,
Or can, the more than Homer of his age ?
Yes—we remember him ; and while we praise
A talent so divine, remember too
That His most holy book from whom it came
Was never meant, was never us'd before,
To buckram out the mem'ry of a man.
But hush !—the muse perhaps is too severe,
And with a gravity beyond the size
And measure of the offence, rebukes a deed
Less impious than absurd, and owing more
To want of judgment than to wrong design.
So in the chapel of old Ely House,
When wand'ring Charles, who meant to be the third,
Had

Book vi. THE WINTER WALK AT NOON. 265

Had fled from William, and the news was fresh,
The simple clerk, but loyal, did announce,
And eke did rear right merrily, two staves,
Sung to the praise and glory of King George.
—Man praises man; and Garrick's mem'ry next,
When time hath somewhat mellow'd it, and made
The idol of our worship while he liv'd,
The god of our idolatry once more,
Shall have its altar; and the world shall go
In pilgrimage to bow before his shrine.
The theatre, too small, shall suffocate
Its squeez'd contents, and more than it admits
Shall sigh at their exclusion, and return
Ungratified. For there some noble lord
Shall stuff his shoulders with king Richard's bunch,
Or wrap himself in Hamlet's inky cloak,
And strut, and storm and straddle, stamp and stare,
To show the world how Garrick did not act,
For Garrick was a worshipper himself;
He drew the Liturgy, and fram'd the rites

And

And solemn ceremonial of the day,
And call'd the world to worship on the banks
Of Avon, fam'd in song. Ah, pleasant proof
That piety has still in human hearts
Some place, a spark or two not yet extinct.
The mulb'ry-tree was hung with blooming wreaths ;
The mulb'ry-tree stood center of the dance ;
The mulb'ry-tree was hymn'd with dulcet airs ;
And from his touchwood trunk, the mulb'ry-tree
Supplied such relics, as devotion holds
Still sacred, and preserves with pious care.
So 'twas an hallow'd time : decorum reign'd,
And mirth without offence. No few return'd,
Doubtless, much edified, and all refresh'd.
—Man praises man. The rabble all alive,
From tippling-benches, cellars, stalls, and styes,
Swarm in the streets. The statesman of the day,
A pompous and slow-moving pageant comes.
Some shout him, and some hang upon his car,
To gaze in 's eyes, and bless him. Maidens wave
Their

Book vi. THE WINTER WALK AT NOON. 267

Their 'kerchiefs, and old women weep for joy :
While others, not so satisfied, unhorfe
The gilded equipage, and, turning loose
His steeds, usurp a place they well deserve.
Why? what has charm'd them? Hath he sav'd the state?
No. Doth he purpose its salvation? No.
Inchanting novelty, that moon at full,
That finds out ev'ry crevice of the head
That is not found and perfect, hath in theirs
Wrought this disturbance. But the wane is near,
And his own cattle must suffice him soon.
Thus idly do we waste the breath of praise,
And dedicate a tribute, in its use
And just direction, sacred, to a thing
Doom'd to the dust, or lodg'd already there,
Encomium in old time was poet's work ;
But poets having lavishly long since
Exhausted all materials of the art,
The task now falls into the public hand ;
And I, contented with an humble theme,

Hive

Have pour'd my stream of panegyric down
The vale of nature, where it creeps and winds
Among her lovely works, with a secure
And unambitious course, reflecting clear,
If not the virtues, yet the worth of brutes.
And I am recompens'd, and deem the toils
Of poetry not lost, if verse of mine
May stand between an animal and woe,
And teach one tyrant pity for his drudge.

The groans of nature in this nether world,
Which Heav'n has heard for ages, have an end.
Foretold by prophets, and by poets sung,
Whose fire was kindled at the prophets' lamp,
The time of rest, the promis'd sabbath comes,
Six thousand years of sorrow have well-nigh
Fulfill'd their tardy and disastrous course
Over a sinful world; and what remains
Of this tempestuous state of human things,
Is merely as the working of a sea

Before

Book vi. THE WINTER WALK AT NOON. 269

Before a calm, that rocks itself to rest :

- For He whose car the winds are, and the clouds
The dust that waits upon his fultry march,
When sin hath mov'd him, and his wrath is hot,
Shall visit earth in mercy, shall descend
Propitious, in his chariot pav'd with love,
And what his storms have blasted and defac'd
For man's revolt, shall with a smile repair.

Sweet is the harp of prophecy ; too sweet
Not to be wrong'd by a mere mortal touch :
Nor can the wonders it records be sung
To meaner music, and not suffer loss.
But when a poet, or when one like me,
Happy to rove among poetic flow'rs,
Though poor in skill to rear them, lights at last
On some fair theme, some theme divinely fair,
Such is the impulse and the spur he feels
To give it praise proportion'd to its worth,

That

That not t' attempt it, arduous as he deems
The labor, were a task more arduous still.

Oh scenes surpassing fable, and yet true,
Scenes of accomplish'd bliss ! which who can see,
Though but in distant prospect, and not feel
His soul refresh'd with foretaste of the joy ?
Rivers of gladness water all the earth,
And clothe all climes with beauty ; the reproach
Of barrenness is past. The fruitful field
Laughs with abundance, and the land, once lean,
Or fertile only in its own disgrace,
Exults to see its thiftly curse repeal'd.
The various seasons woven into one,
And that one season an eternal spring,
The garden fears no blight, and needs no fence,
For there is none to covet, all are full.
The lion, and the libbard, and the bear,
Graze with the fearless flocks ; all bask at noon
Together, or all gambol in the shade

Or

Book vi. THE WINTER WALK AT NOON. 271

Of the same grove, and drink one common stream.

Antipathies are none. No foe to man

Lurks in the serpent now : the mother fees,

And smiles to see her infant's playful hand

Stretch'd forth to dally with the crested worm,

To stroke his azure neck, or to receive

The lambent homage of his arrowy tongue.

All creatures worship man, and all mankind

One Lord, one Father. Error has no place :

That creeping pestilence is driv'n away ;

The breath of heav'n has chas'd it. In the heart

No passion touches a discordant string,

But all is harmony and love. Disease

Is not : the pure and uncontaminate blood

Holds its due course, nor fears the frost of age.

One song employs all nations ; and all cry,

“ Worthy the Lamb, for he was slain for us !”

The dwellers in the vales and on the rocks

Shout to each other, and the mountain tops

From distant mountains catch the flying joy,

Till nation after nation taught the strain,
Earth rolls the rapturous Hosanna round.
Behold the measure of the promise fill'd;
See Salem built, the labor of a God !
Bright as a sun the sacred city shines ;
All kingdoms and all princes of the earth
Flock to that light ; the glory of all lands
Flows into her ; unbounded is her joy,
And endless her encrease. Thy rams are there
* Nebaioth, and the flocks of Kedar there ;
The looms of Ormus, and the mines of Ind,
And Saba's spicy groves, pay tribute there.
Praise is in all her gates : upon her walls,
And in her streets, and in her spacious courts,
Is heard salvation. Eastern Java there
Kneels with the native of the farthest West,

* Nebaioth and Kedar, the sons of Ishmael, and progenitors of the Arabs, in the prophetic scripture here alluded to, may be reasonably considered as representatives of the Gentiles at large.

Book vi. THE WINTER WALK AT NOON. 273

And Æthiopia spreads abroad the hand
And worships. Her report has travell'd forth
Into all lands. From ev'ry clime they come
To see thy beauty and to share thy joy,
O Sion ! an assembly such as earth
Saw never, such as Heav'n stoops down to see.

Thus heav'n-ward all things tend. For all were once
Perfect, and all must be at length restor'd.
So God has greatly purpos'd ; who would else
In his dishonor'd works himself endure
Dishonor, and be wrong'd without redress.
Haste then, and wheel away a shatter'd world,
Ye slow-revolving seasons ! we would see,
(A sight to which our eyes are strangers yet)
A world that does not dread and hate his laws,
And suffer for its crime ; would learn how fair
The creature is that God pronounces good,
How pleasant in itself what pleases him.
Here ev'ry drop of honey hides a sting,
Worms wind themselves into our sweetest flow'rs,

And ev'n the joy that haply some poor heart
Derives from heav'n, pure as the fountain
Is sullied in the stream ; taking a taint
From touch of human lips, at best impure.
Oh for a world in principle as chaste
As this is gross and selfish ! over which
Custom and prejudice shall bear no sway,
That govern all things here, should'ring aside
The meek and modest truth, and forcing her
To seek a refuge from the tongue of strife
In nooks obscure, far from the ways of men :
Where violence shall never lift the sword,
Nor cunning justify the proud man's wrong,
Leaving the poor no remedy but tears :
Where he that fills an office, shall esteem
Th' occasion it presents of doing good
More than the perquisite : Where law shall speak
Seldom, and never but as wisdom prompts
And equity ; not jealous more to guard
A worthless form, than to decide aright :

Where

Book vi. THE WINTER WALK AT NOON. 275

Where fashion shall not sanctify abuse,
Nor smooth good-breeding (supplemental grace)
With lean performance ape the work of love.

Come then, and, added to thy many crowns,
Receive yet one, the crown of all the earth,
Thou who alone art worthy! it was thine
By antient covenant, ere nature's birth,
And thou hast made it thine by purchase since,
And overpaid its value with thy blood.
Thy saints proclaim thee king; and in their hearts
Thy title is engraven with a pen.
Dipt in the fountain of eternal love.
Thy saints proclaim thee king; and thy delay
Gives courage to their foes, who, could they see
The dawn of thy last advent, long-desir'd,
Would creep into the bowels of the hills,
And flee for safety to the falling rocks.
The very spirit of the world is tir'd
Of its own taunting question, ask'd so long,

"Where is the promise of your Lord's approach?"

The infidel has shot his bolts away,

'Till his exhausted quiver yielding none,

He gleans the blunted shafts that have recoil'd,

And aims them at the shield of truth again.

The veil is rent, rent too by priestly hands,

That hides divinity from mortal eyes,

And all the mysteries to faith propos'd,

Insulted and traduc'd, are cast aside.

As useless, to the moles and to the bats.

They now are deem'd the faithful, and are prais'd,

Who, constant only in rejecting thee,

Deny thy Godhead with a martyr's zeal,

And quit their office for their error's sake.

Blind and in love with darkness! yet ev'n these

Worthy, compar'd with sycophants, who kneel

Thy name, adoring, and then preach thee man.

So fares thy church. But how thy church may fare

The world takes little thought; who will may preach,

And what they will: All pastors are alike

To

Book vi. THE WINTER WALK AT NOON. 277

To wand'ring sheep, resolv'd to follow none.
Two gods divide them all, Pleasure and Gain:
For these they live, they sacrifice to these,
And in their service wage perpetual war
With conscience and with thee. Lust in their hearts,
And mischief in their hands, they roam the earth
To prey upon each other; stubborn, fierce,
High-minded, foaming out their own disgrace.
Thy prophets speak of such; and, noting down
The features of the last degen'rate times,
Exhibit ev'ry lineament of these.
Come then, and added to thy many crowns
Receive yet one, as radiant as the rest,
Due to thy last and most effectual work,
Thy word fulfill'd, the conquest of a world.

He is the happy man, whose life ev'n now
Shows somewhat of that happier life to come;
Who, doom'd to an obscure but tranquil state,
Is pleas'd with it, and, were he free to chuse,

Would make his fate his choice; whom peace, the fruit
Of virtue, and whom virtue, fruit of faith,
Prepare for happiness; bespeak him one
Content indeed to sojourn while he must
Below the skies, but having there his home,
The world o'erlooks him in her busy search
Of objects more illustrious in her view;
And, occupy'd as earnestly as she,
Though more sublimely, he o'erlooks the world.
She scorns his pleasures, for she knows them not;
He seeks not hers, for he has prov'd them vain.
He cannot skim the ground like summer birds
Pursuing gilded flies, and such he deems
Her honors, her emoluments, her joys,
Therefore in contemplation is his bliss,
Whose pow'r is such, that whom she lifts from earth
She makes familiar with a heav'n unseen,
And shows him glories yet to be reveal'd.
Not slothful he, though seeming unemploy'd,
And censur'd oft as useless. Stillest streams

Oft water fairest meadows, and the bird
 That flutters least, is longest on the wing.
 Ask him, indeed, what trophies he has rais'd,
 Or what achievements of immortal fame
 He purposes, and he shall answer—none.
 His warfare is within. There unfatigu'd
 His fervent spirit labours. There he fights,
 And there obtains fresh triumphs o'er himself,
 And never with'ring wreaths, compar'd with which
 The laurels that a Cæsar reaps are weeds.
 Perhaps the self-approving haughty world,
 That as she sweeps him with her whistling filks
 Scarce deigns to notice him, or if she see
 Deems him a cypher in the works of God,
 Receives advantage from his noiseless hours
 Of which she little dreams. Perhaps she owes
 Her sunshine and her rain, her blooming spring
 And plenteous harvest, to the pray'r he makes,
 When, Isaac like, the solitary saint
 Walks forth to meditate at even-tide,

And think on her, who thinks not for herself.
Forgive him then, thou bufler in concerns
Of little worth, and idler in the beft,
If, author of no mischief and fome good,
He feek his proper happinefs by means
That may advance, but cannot hinder thine.
Nor though he tread the fecret path of life,
Engage no notice, and enjoy much eafe,
Account him an incumbrance on the ftate,
Receiving benefits, and rend'ring none.
His fphere though humble, if that humble fphere
Shine with his fair example, and though fmall
His influence, if that influence all be fpent
In foothing forrow and in quenching ftife,
In aiding helpiefs indigence, in works
From which at leaft a grateful few derive
Some tafte of comfort in a world of woe,
Then let the fupercilious great confeß
He ferves his country; recompenfes well
The ftate beneath the fhadow of whofe vine

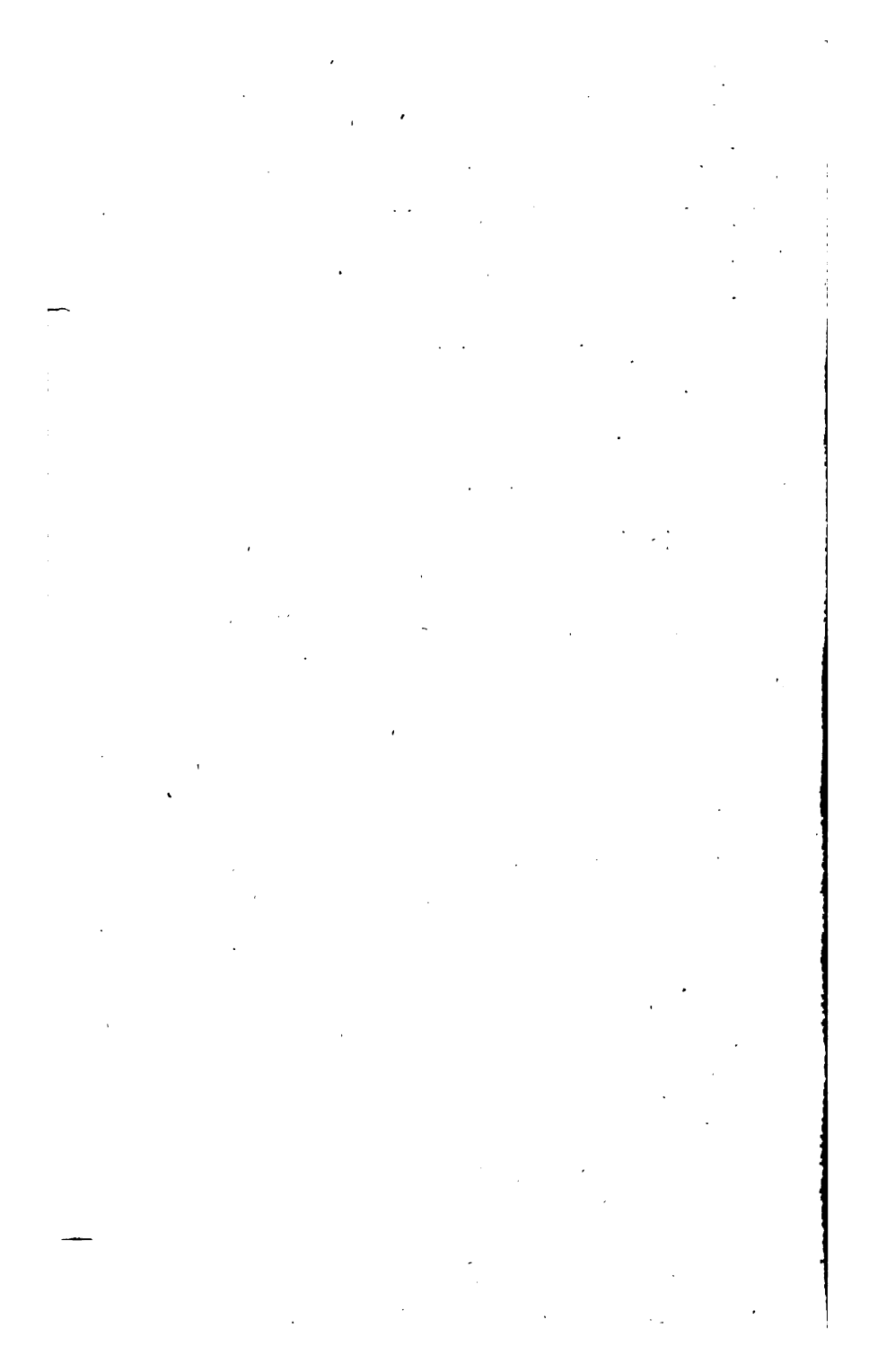
He

He sits secure, and in the scale of life
Holds no ignoble, though a slighted place.
The man whose virtues are more felt than seen,
Must drop indeed the hope of public praise;
But he may boast what few that win it can,
That if his country stand not by his skill,
At least his follies have not wrought her fall.
Polite refinement offers him in vain
Her golden tube, through which a sensual world
Draws gross impurity, and likes it well,
The neat conveyance hiding all th' offence,
Not that he peevishly rejects a mode
Because that world adopts it. If it bear
The stamp and clear impression of good sense,
And be not costly more than of true worth,
He puts it on, and for decorum sake
Can wear it e'en as gracefully as she.
She judges of refinement by the eye,
He by the test of conscience, and a heart
Not soon deceiv'd; aware that what is base

No polish can make sterling, and that vice,
Though well perfum'd and elegantly dress'd,
Like an unburied carcase trick'd with flow'rs,
Is but a garnish'd nuisance, fitter far
For cleanly riddance than for fair attire.
So life glides smoothly and by stealth away,
More golden than that age of fabled gold
Renown'd in ancient song; not vex'd with care
Or stain'd with guilt, beneficent, approv'd
Of God and man, and peaceful in its end.
So glide my life away! and so at last,
My share of duties decently fulfill'd,
May some disease, not tardy to perform
Its destin'd office, yet with gentle stroke,
Dismiss me weary to a safe retreat
Beneath the turf that I have often trod.
It shall not grieve me, then, that once, when call'd
To dress a Sofa with the flow'rs of verse,
I play'd awhile, obedient to the fair,
With that light task; but soon, to please her more
Whom

Book vi. THE WINTER WALK AT NOON. 283

Whom flow'rs alone I knew would little please,
Let fall th' unfinish'd wreath, and rov'd for fruit ;
Rov'd far, and gather'd much : some harsh, 'tis true,
Pick'd from the thorns and briars of reproof,
But wholesome, well-digested ; grateful some
To palates that can taste immortal truth,
Insipid else, and sure to be despis'd.
But all is in his hand whose praise I seek.
In vain the poet sings, and the world hears,
If he regard not, though divine the theme,
'Tis not in artful measures, in the chime
And idle tinkling of a minstrel's lyre,
To charm his ear, whose eye is on the heart ;
Whose frown can disappoint the proudest strain,
Whose approbation—prosper even mine.



A N
E P I S T L E
T O

J O S E P H H I L L, E s q.

DEAR JOSEPH—five and twenty years ago—
Alas! how time escapes—'tis even so—
With frequent intercourse, and always sweet,
And always friendly, we were wont to cheat
A tedious hour — and now we never meet.
As some grave gentleman in Terence says,
('Twas therefore much the same in ancient days)
Good lack, we know not what to-morrow brings —
Strange fluctuation of all human things !
True. Changes will befall, and friends may part,
But distance only cannot change the heart :

And,

And, were I call'd to prove th' assertion true;
One proof should serve—a reference to you.

Whence comes it then, that in the wane of life,
Though nothing have occur'd to kindle strife,
We find the friends we fancied we had won,
Though num'rous once, reduc'd to few or none?
Can gold grow worthless that has stood the touch?
No: Gold they seem'd, but they were never such.

Horatio's servant once, with bow and cringe,
Swinging the parlour-door upon its hinge,
Dreading a negative, and overaw'd
Lest he should trespass, begg'd to go abroad.
Go, fellow! — whither? — turning short about —
Nay. Stay at home; — you're always going out.
'Tis but a step, sir, just at the street's end —
For what? — An please you, sir, to see 'a friend.
A friend! Horatio cried, and seem'd to start —
Yea marry shalt thou, and with all my heart —

And fetch my cloak, for though the night be raw,
I'll see him too—the first I ever saw.

I knew the man, and knew his nature mild,
And was his play-thing often when a child;
But somewhat at that moment pinch'd him close,
Else he was feldom bitter or morose:
Perhaps, his confidence just then betray'd,
His grief might prompt him with the speech he made;
Perhaps 'twas mere good-humour gave it birth,
The harmless play of pleasantry and mirth.
Howe'er it was, his language, in my mind,
Bespoke at least a man that knew mankind.

But not to moralize too much, and strain
To prove an evil of which all complain,
(I hate long arguments, verbosely spun)
One story more, dear Hill, and I have done:
Once on a time, an Emp'ror, a wise man,
No matter where, in China or Japan,

Decreed

Decreed that whosoever should offend
Against the well-known duties of a friend,
Convicted once, should ever after wear
But half a coat, and show his bosom bare.
The punishment importing this, no doubt,
That all was naught within, and all found out.

Oh happy Britain! we have not to fear
Such hard and arbitrary measure here;
Else, could a law like that which I relate,
Once have the sanction of our triple state,
Some few, that I have known in days of old,
Would run most dreadful risk of catching cold;
While you, my friend, whatever wind should blow,
Might traverse England safely to and fro,
An honest man, close-button'd to the chin,
Broad-cloth without, and a warm heart within.

T I R O C I N I U M:

Ο Ξ, Α

REVIEW OF SCHOOLS.

Κεφαλαιον δι παιδαγωγικης ορθης τροφης.

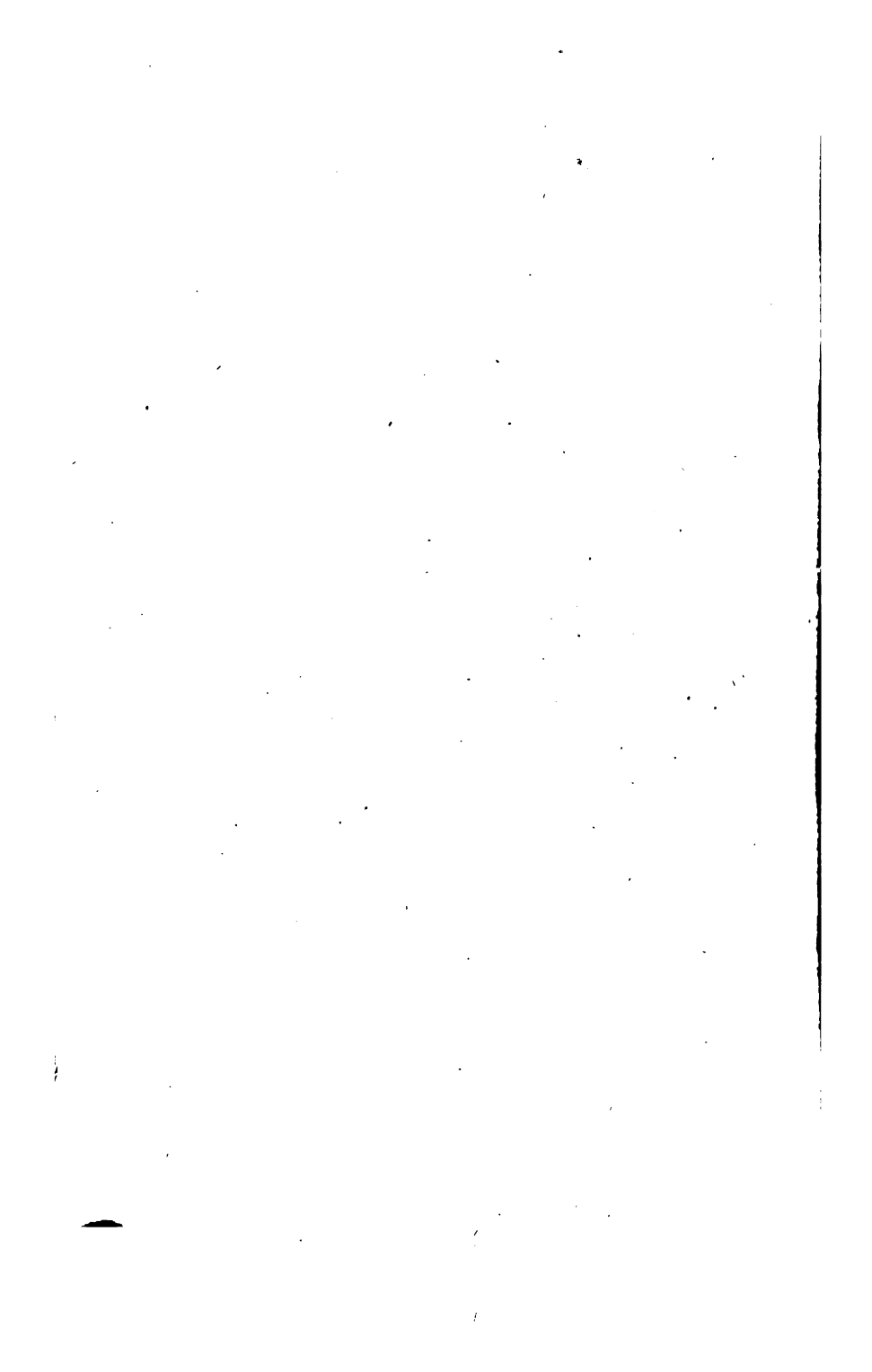
PLATO.

Αρχη πολιτικης αγωγης, των τροφων.

DIOG. LAERT.

VOL. II.

U



TO THE
REV. WILLIAM CAWTHORNE UNWIN,

RECTOR OF STOCK IN ESSEX,
THE TUTOR OF HIS TWO SONS;

THE FOLLOWING

P O E M,
RECOMMENDING PRIVATE TUITION

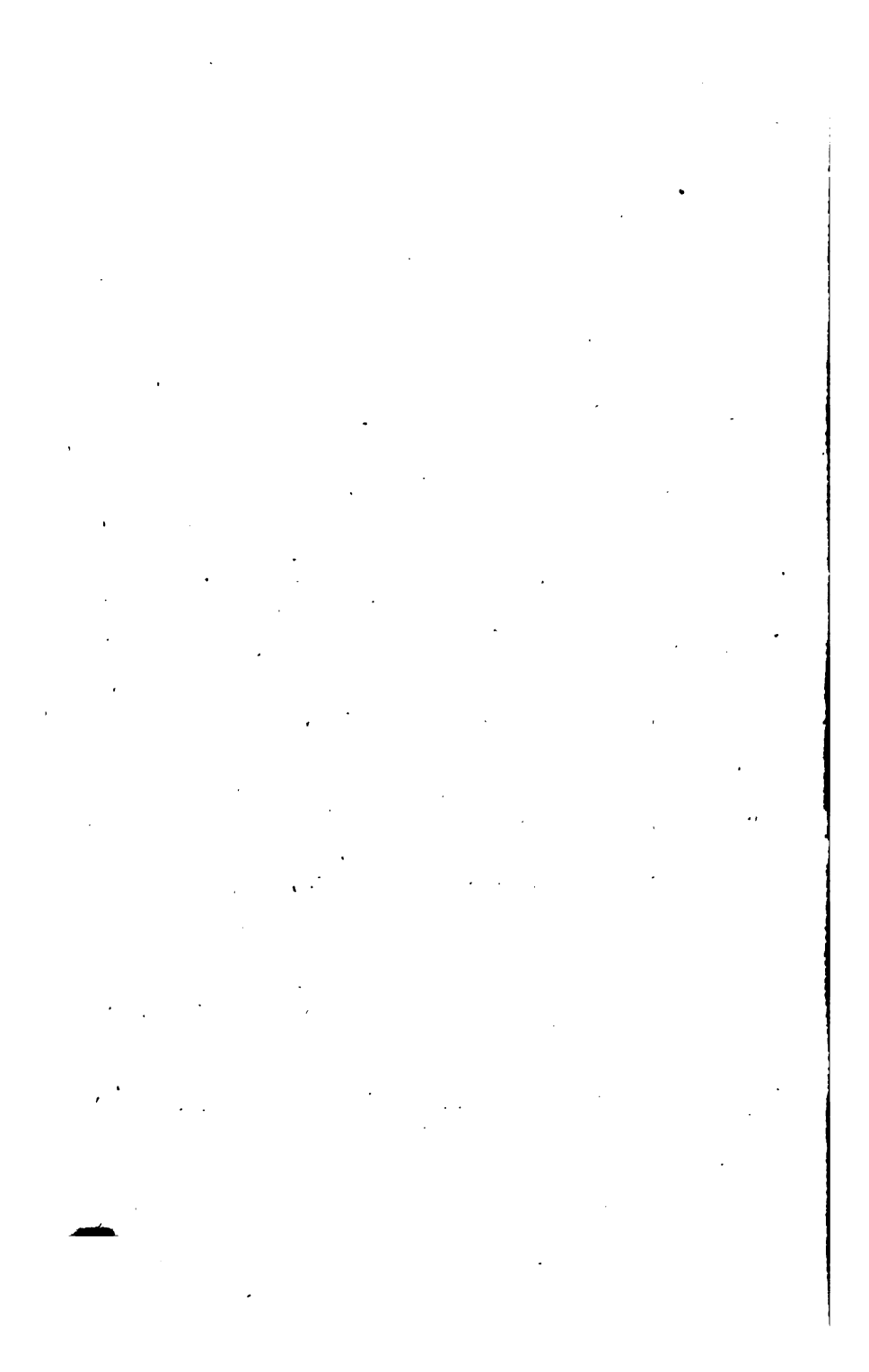
IN PREFERENCE TO
AN EDUCATION AT SCHOOL,

IS INSCRIBED,

BY HIS AFFECTIONATE FRIEND,

WILLIAM COWPER.

Olney, Nov. 6, 1784.



TIROCINIUM,

I t is not from his form, in which we trace
Strength join'd with beauty, dignity with grace,
That man, the master of this globe, derives
His right of empire o'er all that lives.
That form indeed, th' associate of a mind
Vast in its pow'rs, ethereal in its kind,
That form, the labour of almighty skill,
Fram'd for the service of a free-born will,
Asserts precedence, and bespeaks controul,
But borrows all its grandeur from the soul.
Hers is the state, the splendour, and the throne,
An intellectual kingdom, all her own.

For her, the mem'ry fills her ample page
With truths pour'd down from ev'ry distant age ;
For her amasses an unbounded store,
The wisdom of great nations, now no more ;
Though laden, not incumber'd with her spoil,
Laborious, yet unconscious of her toil,
When copiously supplied, then most enlarg'd,
Still to be fed, and not to be furcharg'd.
For her, the fancy roving unconfin'd,
The present muse of ev'ry pensive mind,
Works magic wonders, adds a brighter hue
To nature's scenes, than nature ever knew ;
At her command, winds rise and waters roar,
Again she lays them slumb'ring on the shore,
With flow'r and fruit the wilderness supplies,
Or bids the rocks in ruder pomp arise.
For her, the judgment, umpire in the strife
That grace and nature have to wage through life,
Quick-sighted arbiter of good and ill,
Appointed sage preceptor to the will,

Condemns,

Condemns, approves, and with a faithful voice
Guides the decision of a doubtful choice.

Why did the fiat of a God give birth
To yon fair sun and his attendant earth;
And, when descending he resigns the skies,
Why takes the gentler moon her turn to rise,
Whom ocean feels through all his countless waves,
And owns her pow'r on ev'ry shore he laves?
Why do the seasons still enrich the year,
Fruitful and young as in their first career?
Spring hangs her infant blossoms on the trees,
Rock'd in the cradle of the western breeze;
Summer in haste the thriving charge receives
Beneath the shade of her expanded leaves,
'Till autumn's fiercer heats and plenteous dews
Dye them at last in all their glowing hues—
'Twere wild profusion all, and bootless waste,
Pow'r misemploy'd, munificence misplac'd,

U 4

Had

Had not its Author dignified the plan,
 And crown'd it with the majesty of man.
 Thus form'd, thus plac'd, intelligent, and taught,
 Look where he will, the wonders God has wrought,
 The wildest scorner of his Maker's laws
 Finds in a sober moment time to pause,
 To press th' important question on his heart,
 " Why form'd at all, and wherefore as thou art ?"
 If man be what he seems, this hour a slave,
 The next, mere dust and ashes in the grave ;
 Endu'd with reason only to descry
 His crimes and follies with an aching eye ;
 With passions, just that he may prove, with pain,
 The force he spends against their fury, vain ;
 And if, soon after having burnt, by turns,
 With ev'ry lust with which frail nature burns,
 His being end where death dissolves the bond,
 The tomb take all, and all be blank beyond ;
 Then he, of all that nature has brought forth,
 Stands self-impeach'd the creature of least worth,

And

And useless while he lives; and when he dies,
Brings into doubt the wisdom of the skies.

Truths that the learn'd pursue with eager thought,
Are not important always as dear-bought,
Proving at last, though told in pompous strains,
A childish waste of philosophic pains;
But truths on which depends our main concern,
That 'tis our shame and mis'ry not to learn,
Shine by the side of ev'ry path we tread
With such a lustre, he that runs may read.
'Tis true, that if to trifle life away
Down to the sun-set of their latest day,
Then perish on futurity's wide shore
Like fleeting exhalations, found no more,
Were all that Heav'n requir'd of human kind,
And all the plan their destiny design'd,
What none could rev'rence all might justly blame,
And man would breathe but for his Maker's shame,

But

But reason heard, and nature well perus'd,
At once the dreaming mind is disabus'd.
If all we find possessing earth, sea, air,
Reflect his attributes who plac'd them there,
Fulfil the purpose, and appear design'd
Proofs of the wisdom of th' all-seeing mind,
'Tis plain, the creature whom he chose t' invest
With kingship and dominion o'er the rest,
Receiv'd his nobler nature, and was made
Fit for the power in which he stands array'd,
That first or last, hereafter if not here,
He too might make his author's wisdom clear,
Praise him on earth, or, obstinately dumb,
Suffer his justice in a world to come.
This once believ'd, 'twere logic misapplied
To prove a consequence by none denied,
That we are bound to cast the minds of youth
Betimes into the mould of heav'nly truth,
That taught of God they may indeed be wise,
Nor ignorantly wand'ring miss the skies.

In early days the conscience has in most
 A quickness, which in later life is lost,
 Preserv'd from guilt by salutary fears,
 Or, guilty, soon relenting into tears.
 Too careless often, as our years proceed,
 What friends we sort with, or what books we read,
 Our parents yet exert a prudent care
 To feed our infant minds with proper fare,
 And wisely store the nurs'ry, by degrees,
 With wholesome learning, yet acquir'd with ease.
 Neatly secur'd from being soil'd or torn,
 Beneath a pane of thin translucent horn,
 A book (to please us at a tender age
 'Tis call'd a book, though but a single page)
 Presents the pray'r the Saviour deign'd to teach,
 Which children use, and parsons—when they preach.
 Lispering our syllables, we scramble next
 Through moral narrative, or sacred text,
 And learn with wonder how this world began,
 Who made, who marr'd, and who has ransom'd man.

Points,

Points, which unless the Scripture made them plain,
The wisest heads might agitate in vain.

Oh thou, whom borne on fancy's eager wing
Back to the season of life's happy spring,
I pleas'd remember, and while mem'ry yet
Holds fast her office here, can ne'er forget,
Ingenious dreamer, in whose well told-tale
Sweet fiction and sweet truth alike prevail,
Whose hum'rous vein, strong sense, and simple style,
May teach the gayest, make the gravest smile,
Witty, and well employ'd, and like thy Lord,
Speaking in parables his flighted word,
I name thee not, lest so despis'd a name
Should move a sneer at thy deserved fame;
Yet ev'n in transitory life's late day,
That mingles all my brown with sober grey,
Revere the man, whose *Pilgrim* marks the road,
And guides the *Progress* of the soul to God.
'Twere well with most, if books that could engage
Their childhood, pleas'd them at a riper age;

The

The man, approving what had charm'd the boy,
 Would die at last in comfort, peace, and joy,
 And not with curses on his art who stole
 The gem of truth from his unguarded soul.
 The stamp of artless piety, impress'd
 By kind tuition on his yielding breast,
 The youth now bearded, and yet pert and raw,
 Regards with scorn, though once receiv'd with awe,
 And, warp'd into the labyrinth of lies,
 That babblers, call'd philosophers, devise,
 Blasphemes his creed, as founded on a plan
 Replete with dreams, unworthy of a man.
 Touch but his nature in its ailing part,
 Assert the native evil of his heart,
 His pride resents the charge, although the proof*
 Rise in his forehead, and seem rank enough ;
 Point to the cure, describe a Saviour's cross
 As God's expedient to retrieve his loss,

The

* See 2 Chron. ch. xxvi. ver. 19.

The young apostate sickens at the view,
And hates it with the malice of a Jew.

How weak the barrier of mere nature proves,
Oppos'd against the pleasures nature loves !
While self-betray'd, and wilfully undone,
She longs to yield, no sooner woo'd than won.
Try now the merits of this blest exchange
Of modest truth for wit's eccentric range.
'Time was, he clos'd as he began the day
With decent duty, not ashamed to pray ;
The practice was a bond upon his heart,
A pledge he gave for a consistent part,
Nor could he dare presumptuously dispense
A pow'r confess'd so lately on his knees.
But now, farewell all legendary tales,
The shadows fly, philosophy prevails ;
Pray'r to the winds, and caution to the waves,
Religion makes the free by nature slaves,

Priests

Priests have invented, and the world admir'd
 What knavish priests promulgate as inspir'd,
 'Till reason, now no longer overaw'd,
 Resumes her pow'rs, and spurns the clumsy fraud,
 And, common-sense diffusing real day,
 The meteor of the gospel dies away.
 Such rhapsodies our shrewd discerning youth
 Learn from expert enquirers after truth ;
 Whose only care, might truth presume to speak,
 Is not to find what they profess to seek.
 And thus, well-tutor'd only while we share
 A mother's lectures and a nurse's care ;
 And taught at schools much mythologic stuff *,
 But sound religion sparingly enough ;

Our

* The author begs leave to explain :— Sensible that, without such knowledge, neither the ancient poets nor historians can be tasted, or indeed understood, he does not mean to censure the pains that are taken to instruct a school-boy in the religion of the heathen, but merely that neglect of Christian culture which leaves him shamefully ignorant of his own.

Our early notices of truth, disgrac'd,
Soon lose their credit, and are all effac'd.

Would you your son should be a sot or dunce,
Lascivious, headstrong, or all these at once;
That, in good time, the stripling's finish'd taste
For loose expence, and fashionable waste,
Should prove your ruin, and his own at last;
Train him in public with a mob of boys,
Childish in mischief only and in noise,
Else of a mannish growth, and five in ten
In infidelity and lewdness, men.

There shall he learn, ere sixteen winters old,
That authors are most useful, pawn'd or sold;
That pedantry is all that schools impart,
But taverns teach the knowledge of the heart;
There waiter Dick, with Bacchanalian lays,
Shall win his heart and have his drunken praise,
His counsellor and bosom-friend shall prove,
And some street-pacing harlot his first love.

Schools, unless discipline were doubly strong,
 Detain their adolescent charge too long ;
 The management of Tiroes of eighteen
 Is difficult, their punishment obscene.
 The stout tall Captain, whose superior size
 The minor heroes view with envious eyes,
 Becomes their pattern, upon whom they fix
 Their whole attention, and ape all his tricks,
 His pride, that scorns t' obey or to submit,
 With them is courage, his effrontery wit.
 His wild excursions, window-breaking feats,
 Robb'ry of gardens, quarrels in the streets,
 His hair-breadth 'scapes, and all his daring schemes,
 Transport them, and are made their fav'rite themes,
 In little bosoms such atchievements strike
 A kindred spark, they burn to do the like,
 Thus, half-accomplish'd ere he yet begin
 To show the peeping down upon his chin,
 And, as maturity of years comes on,
 Made just th' adept that you design'd your son,

T' insure the perseverance of his course,
And give your monstrous project all its force,
Send him to college. If he there be tam'd,
Or in one article of vice reclaim'd,
Where no regard of ord'nances is shown.
Or look'd for now, the fault must be his own.
Some sneaking virtue lurks in him, no doubt,
Where neither strumpets charms, nor drinking-bout,
Nor gambling practices, can find it out. }
Such youths of spirit, and that spirit too,
Ye nurs'ries of our boys, we owe to you :
Though from ourselves the mischief more proceeds,
For public schools 'tis public folly feeds ;
The slaves of custom and establish'd mode,
With pack-horse constancy we keep the road,
Crooked or straight, through quags or thorny dells,
True to the jingling of our leaders bells.
To follow foolish precedents, and wink
With both our eyes, is easier than to think ;

And

And such an age as ours baulks no expence,
Except of caution and of common-sense,
Else sure, notorious fact and proof so plain
Would turn our steps into a wiser train.
I blame not those who with what care they can
O'erwatch the num'rous and unruly clan,
Or if I blame, 'tis only that they dare
Promise a work of which they must despair.
Have ye, ye sage intendants of the whole,
An ubiquarian presence and controul;
Elisha's eye, that when Gehazi stray'd
Went with him, and saw all the game he play'd?
Yes—ye are conscious; and on all the shelves
Your pupils strike upon, have struck yourselves.
Or if by nature sober, ye had then,
Boys as ye were, the gravity of men,
Ye knew at least, by constant proofs address'd
To ears and eyes, the vices of the rest.
But ye connive at what ye cannot cure,
And evils not to be endur'd, endure,

Left pow'r exerted, but without success,
Should make the little ye retain still less.
Ye once were justly fam'd for bringing forth
Undoubted scholarship and genuine worth,
And in the firmament of fame still shines;
A glory bright as that of all the signs,
Of poets rais'd by you, and statesmen and divines,
Peace to them all, those brilliant times are fled,
And no such lights are kindling in their stead.
Our striplings shine indeed, but with such rays
As set the midnight riot in a blaze,
And seem, if judg'd by their expressive looks,
Deeper in none than in their surgeons books.

Say muse (for education made the song,
No muse can hesitate or linger long)
What causes move us, knowing as we must
That these *Menageries* all fail their trust,
To send our sons to scout and scamper there,
While colts and puppies cost us so much care?

Be it a weakness, it deserves some praise,
 We love the play-place of our early days;
 The scene is touching, and the heart is stone
 That feels not at that sight, and feels at none.
 The wall on which we tried our graving skill,
 The very name we carv'd subsisting still,
 The bench on which we sat while deep employ'd,
 Though mangled, hack'd, and hew'd, not yet destroy'd;
 The little ones unbutton'd, glowing hot,
 Playing our games, and on the very spot,
 As happy as we once, to kneel and draw
 The chalky ring, and knuckle down at taw,
 To pitch the ball into the grounded hat,
 Or drive it devious with a dext'rous pat;
 The pleasing spectacle at once excites
 Such recollection of our own delights,
 That viewing it, we seem almost t' obtain
 Our innocent sweet simple years again.
 This fond attachment to the well-known place
 Whence first we started into life's long race,

Maintains its hold with such unfailing sway,
 We feel it ev'n in age, and at our latest day.
 Hark ! how the fire of chits, whose future share
 Of classic food begins to be his care,
 With his own likeness plac'd on either knee,
 Indulges all a father's heart-felt glee,
 And tells them, as he strokes their silver locks,
 That they must soon learn Latin, and to box ;
 Then turning, he regales his list'ning wife
 With all th' adventures of his early life,
 His skill in coachmanship, or driving chaise,
 In bilking tavern bills and spouting plays,
 What shifts he us'd, detected in a scrape,
 How he was flogg'd, or had the luck t' escape,
 What sums he lost at play, and how he sold
 Watch, seals, and all—'till all his pranks are told.
 Retracing thus his *frolics* ('tis a name
 That palliates deeds of folly and of shame)
 He gives the local bias all its sway,
 Resolves that where he play'd his sons shall play,

And destines their bright genius to be shown
 Just in the scene where he display'd his own.
 The meek and bashful boy will soon be taught
 To be as bold and forward as he ought,
 The rude will scuffle through with ease enough,
 Great Schools suit best the sturdy and the rough.
 Ah happy designation, prudent choice,
 Th' event is sure, expect it and rejoice !
 Soon see your wish fulfill'd in either child,
 The pert made perter, and the tame made wild.

The great indeed, by titles, riches, birth,
 Excus'd th' incumbrance of more solid worth,
 Are best dispos'd of, where with most success
 They may acquire that confident address,
 Those habits of profuse and lewd expence,
 That scorn of all delights but those of sense,
 Which though in plain plebeians we condemn,
 With so much reason all expect from them.

But families of less illustrious fame,
 Whose chief distinction is their spotless name,
 Whose heirs, their honors none, their income small,
 Must shine by true desert, or not at all,
 What dream they of, that with so little care
 They risk their hopes, their dearest treasure there ?
 They dream of little Charles or William grac'd
 With wig prolix, down-flowing to his waist,
 They see th' attentive crowds his talents draw,
 They hear him speak—the oracle of law.
 The father who designs his babe a priest,
 Dreams him episcopally such at least,
 And while the playful jockey scours the room
 Briskly, astride upon the parlour broom,
 In fancy sees him more superbly ride
 In coach with purple lin'd, and mitres on its side.
 Events improbable and strange as these,
 Which only a parental eye foresees,
 A public school shall bring to pass with ease.

But

But how? resides such virtue in that air
 As must create an appetite for pray'r?
 And will it breathe into him all the zeal
 That candidates for such a prize should feel,
 To take the lead and be the foremost still
 In all true worth and literary skill?
 " Ah blind to bright futurity, untaught
 " The knowledge of the world, and dull of thought!
 " Church-ladders are not always mounted best
 " By learned Clerks and Latinists profess'd.
 " Th' exalted prize demands an upward look,
 " Not to be found by poring on a book.
 " Small skill in Latin, and still less in Greek,
 " Is more than adequate to all I seek;
 " Let erudition grace him or not grace,
 " I give the bawble but the second place,
 " His wealth, fame, honors, all that I intend,
 " Subsist and center in one point—a friend.
 " A friend, whate'er he studies or neglects,
 " Shall give him consequence, heal all defects,

His

- " His intercourse with peers, and sons of peers—
 " There dawns the splendour of his future years,
 " In that bright quarter his propitious skies
 " Shall blush betimes, and there his glory rise.
 " *Your Lordship, and your Grace!* what school can teach
 " A rhet'ric equal to those parts of speech?
 " What need of Homer's verse or Tully's prose,
 " Sweet interjections! if he learn but those?
 " Let rev'rend churls his ignorance rebuke,
 " Who starve upon a dog's-ear'd Pentateuch,
 " The parson knows enough who knows a Duke."— }

Egregious purpose! worthily begun
 In barb'rous prostitution of your son,
 Press'd on *his* part by means that would disgrace
 A scriv'ner's clerk or footman out of place,
 And ending, if at last its end be gain'd,
 In sacrilege, in God's own house profan'd.
 It may succeed; and if his sins should call
 For more than common punishment, it shall;

The

The wretch shall rise, and be the thing on earth
 Least qualified in honor, learning, worth,
 To occupy a sacred, awful post;
 In which the best and worthiest tremble most.
 The *royal letters* are a thing of course,
 A king that would, might recommend his horse,
 And Deans, no doubt, and Chapters, with one voice,
 As bound in duty, would confirm the choice.
 Behold your Bishop ! well he plays his part,
 Christian in name, and Infidel in heart,
 Ghostly in office, earthly in his plan,
 A slave at court, elsewhere a lady's man,
 Dumb as a senator, and as a priest
 A piece of mere church-furniture at best ;
 To live estrang'd from God his total scope,
 And his end sure, without one glimpse of hope.
 But fair although and feasible it seem,
 Depend not much upon your golden dream ;
 For Providence, that seems concern'd t' exempt
 The hallow'd bench from absolute contempt,

In

In spite of all the wrigglers into place,
 Still keeps a seat or two for worth and grace;
 And therefore 'tis, that, though the sight be rare,
 We sometimes see a Lowth or Bagot there.
 Besides, school-friendships are not always found,
 Though fair in promise, permanent and found;
 The most disint'rested and virtuous minds
 In early years connected, time unbinds;
 New situations give a diff'rent cast
 Of habit, inclination, temper, taste,
 And he that seem'd our counterpart at first,
 Soon shows the strong similitude revers'd.
 Young heads are giddy, and young hearts are warm,
 And make mistakes for manhood to reform.
 Boys are at best but pretty buds unblown,
 Whose scent and hues are rather guess'd than known;
 Each dreams that each is just what he appears,
 But learns his error in maturer years,
 When disposition, like a sail unfurl'd,
 Shows all its rents and patches to the world.

If

If therefore, ev'n when honest in design,
 A boyish friendship may so soon decline,
 'Twere wiser sure t' inspire a little heart
 With just abhorrence of so mean a part,
 Than set your son to work at a vile trade
 For wages so unlikely to be paid,

Our public hives of puerile resort,
 That are of chief and most approv'd report,
 To such base hopes, in many a fordid soul,
 Owe their repute in part, but not the whole.
 A principle, whose proud pretensions pass
 Unquestion'd, though the jewel be but glass—
 That with a world, not often over-nice,
 Ranks as a virtue, and is yet a vice ;
 Or rather a gross compound, justly tried,
 Of envy, hatred, jealousy, and pride—
 Contributes most perhaps t' inhanche their fame,
 And Emulation is its specious name.

Boys

Boys once on fire with that contentious zeal
Feel all the rage that female rivals feel,
The prize of beauty in a woman's eyes
Not brighter than in theirs the scholar's prize.
The spirit of that competition burns
With all varieties of ill by turns ;
Each vainly magnifies his own success,
Repents his fellow's, wishes it were less,
Exults in his miscarriage if he fail,
Deems his reward too great if he prevail,
And labors to surpass him day and night,
Less for improvement, than to tickle spite.
The spur is pow'rful, and I grant its force,
It pricks the genius forward in its course,
Allows short time for play, and none for sloth,
And, felt alike by each, advances both ;
But judge, where so much evil intervenes,
The end, though plausible, not worth the means.
Weigh, for a moment, classical desert
Against an heart deprav'd and temper hurt,

Hurt

Hurt too perhaps for life, for early wrong.
 Done to the nobler part, affects is long,
 And you are staunch indeed in learning's cause,
 If you can crown a discipline, that draws
 Such mischiefs after it, with much applause.

Connection form'd for int'rest, and endear'd
 By selfish views, thus censur'd and cashier'd;
 And Emulation, as engend'ring hate,
 Doom'd to a no less ignominious fate,
 The props of such proud seminaries fall,
 The JACHIN and the BOAZ of them all.
 Great schools rejected then, as those that swell
 Beyond a size that can be manag'd well,
 Shall royal institutions miss the bays,
 And small academies win all the praise.
 Force not my drift beyond its just intent,
 I praise a school as Pope a government;
 So take my judgment in his language dress'd,
 "Whate'er is best administer'd, is best."

Few

Few boys are born with talents that excel,
 But all are capable of living well;
 Then ask not, whether limited or large?
 But, watch they strictly, or neglect their charge?
 If anxious only that their boys may *learn*,
 While *Morals* languish, a despis'd concern,
 The great and small deserve one common blame,
 Diff'rent in size, but in effect the same.
 Much zeal in virtue's cause all teachers boast,
 Though motives of mere lucre sway the most;
 Therefore in towns and cities they abound,
 For there, the game they seek is easiest found,
 Though there, in spite of all that care can do,
 Traps to catch youth are most abundant too,
 If shrewd, and of a well-constructed brain,
 Keen in pursuit, and vig'rous to retain,
 Your son come forth a prodigy of skill,
 As wheresoever taught, so form'd, he will,
 The pædagogues, with self-complacent air,
 Claims more than half the praise as his due share;

But

But if, with all his genius, he betray,
 Not more intelligent than loose and gay,
 Such vicious habits as disgrace his name,
 Threaten his health, his fortune, and his fame,
 Though want of due restraint alone have bred
 The symptoms that you see with so much dread,
 Unenvy'd there he may sustain alone
 The whole reproach, the fault was all his own.

Oh 'tis a fight to be with joy perus'd,
 By all whom sentiment has not abus'd,
 New-fangled sentiment, the boasted grace
 Of those who never feel in the right place;
 A fight surpass'd by none that we can show,
 Though Vestris on one leg still shine below;
 A father blest with an ingenuous son,
 Father, and friend, and tutor all in one.
 How!—turn again to tales long since forgot,
 Æsop, and Phædrus, and the rest?—Why not?

He will not blush, that has a father's heart,
To take in childish plays a childish part,
But bends his sturdy back to any toy
That youth takes pleasure in, to please his boy;
Then why resign into a stranger's hand
A task as much within your own command,
That God and nature, and your int'rest too,
Seem with one voice to delegate to you?
Why hire a lodging in a house unknown,
For one whose tend'rest thoughts all hover round your
own?

This second weaning, needless as it is,
How does it lacerate both your heart and his!
Th' indented stick, that loses day by day
Notch after notch, 'till all are smooth'd away,
Bears witness, long ere his dismissal come,
With what intense desire he wants his home.
But though the joys he hopes beneath your roof
Bid fair enough to answer in the proof,

Harmless,

Harmless, and safe, and nat'ral as they are,
A disappointment waits him even there :
Arriv'd, he feels an unexpected change,
He blushes, hangs his head, is shy and strange,
No longer takes, as once, with fearless ease,
His fav'rite stand between his father's knees,
But seeks the corner of some distant seat,
And eyes the door, and watches a retreat,
And, least familiar where he should be most,
Feels all his happiest privileges lost,
Alas, poor boy !—the natural effect
Of love by absence chill'd into respect.
Say, what accomplishments, at school acquir'd,
Brings he, to sweeten fruits so undesir'd ?
Thou well deserv'st an alienated son,
Unless thy conscious heart acknowledge—none ;
None that, in thy domestic snug recess,
He had not made his own with more address,
Though some perhaps that shock thy feeling mind,
And better never learn'd, or left behind.

Add too, that, thus estrang'd, thou canst obtain
 By no kind arts his confidence again ;
 That here begins with most that long complaint
 Of filial frankness lost, and love grown faint,
 Which, oft neglected, in life's waning years,
 A parent pours into regardless ears.

Like caterpillars dangling under trees
 By slender threads, and swinging in the breeze,
 Which filthily bewray and fore disgrace
 The boughs in which are bred th' unseemly race,
 While ev'ry worm industriously weaves
 And winds his web about the rivell'd leaves ;
 So num'rous are the follies that annoy
 The mind and heart of ev'ry sprightly boy,
 Imaginations noxious and perverse,
 Which admonition can alone disperse.
 Th' encroaching nuisance asks a faithful hand,
 Patient, affectionate, of high command,

To

To check the procreation of a breed
 Sure to exhaust the plant on which they feed.
 'Tis not enough that Greek or Roman page,
 At stated hours, his freakish thoughts engage;
 Ev'n in his pastimes he requires a friend
 To warn, and teach him safely to unbend,
 O'er all his pleasures gently to preside,
 Watch his emotions and controul their tide,
 And, levying thus, and with an easy sway,
 A tax of profit from his very play,
 T' impress a value, not to be eras'd,
 On moments squander'd else, and running all to waste.
 And seems it nothing in a father's eye
 That unimprov'd those many moments fly?
 And is he well content his son should find
 No nourishment to feed his growing mind
 But conjugated verbs, and nouns declin'd?
 For such is all the mental food purvey'd
 By public hacknies in the schooling trade;

Who feed a pupil's intellect with store
Of syntax truly, but with little more ;
Dismiss their cares when they dismiss their flock,
Machines themselves, and govern'd by a clock.
Perhaps a father blest with any brains
Would deem it no abuse or waste of pains,
'T' improve this diet, at no great expence,
With sav'ry truth and wholesome common sense ;
To lead his son, for prospects of delight,
To some not steep, though philosophic height,
Thence to exhibit to his wond'ring eyes
Yon circling worlds, their distance, and their size,
The moons of Jove, and Saturn's belted ball,
And the harmonious order of them all ,
To show him, in an insect or a flow'r,
Such microscopic proof of skill and pow'r,
As, hid from ages past, God now displays
To combat Atheists with in modern days ;
To spread the earth before him, and commend,
With designation of the finger's end,

Its various parts to his attentive note,
 Thus bringing home to him the most remote ;
 To teach his heart to glow with gen'rous flame,
 Caught from the deeds of men of ancient fame ;
 And, more than all, with commendation due
 To set some living worthy in his view,
 Whose fair example may at once inspire
 A wish to copy what he must admire.
 Such knowledge gain'd betimes, and which appears
 Though solid, not too weighty for his years,
 Sweet in itself, and not forbidding sport,
 When health demands it, of athletic fort,
 Would make him—what some lovely boys have been,
 And more than one perhaps that I have seen—
 An evidence, and reprehension, both,
 Of the mere school-boy's lean and tardy growth.

Art thou a man professionally tied,
 With all thy faculties elsewhere applied,

Y 4

Too

Too busy to intend a meaner care
Than how t' enrich thyself, and next thine heir ;
Or art thou (as though rich, perhaps thou art)
But poor in knowledge, having none t' impart ;—
Behold that figure, neat, though plainly clad,
His sprightly mingled with a shade of sad ;
Not of a nimble tongue, though now and then
Heard to articulate like other men ;
No jester, and yet lively in discourse,
His phrase well chosen, clear, and full of force ;
And his address, if not quite French in ease,
Not English stiff, but frank and form'd to please ;
Low in the world, because he scorns its arts,
A man of letters, manners, morals, parts ;
Unpatroniz'd, and therefore little known,
Wife for himself and his few friends alone—
In him thy well-appointed proxy see,
Arm'd for a work too difficult for thee ;
Prepar'd by taste, by learning, and true worth,
To form thy son, to strike his genius forth ;

Beneath

Beneath thy roof, beneath thine eye to prove
The force of discipline when back'd by love;
To double all thy pleasure in thy child,
His mind inform'd, his morals undefil'd.
Safe under such a wing, the boy shall show
No spots contracted among grooms below,
Nor taint his speech with meannesses, design'd
By footman Tom for witty and refin'd.
There, in his commerce with the liveried herd,
Lurks the contagion chiefly to be fear'd;
For since (so fashion dictates) all who claim
An higher than a mere plebeian fame,
Find it expedient, come what mischief may,
To entertain a thief or two in pay,
(And they that can afford sh' expence of more,
Some half a dozen and some half a score)
Great cause occurs to save him from a band
So sure to spoil him, and so near at hand;
A point secur'd, if once he be supplied
With some such Mentor always at his side.

Are

Are such men rare? perhaps they would abound
Were occupation easier to be found,
Were education, else so sure to fail,
Conducted on a manageable scale,
And schools, that have outliv'd all just esteem,
Exchang'd for the secure domestic scheme.—
But, having found him, be thou duke or earl,
Show thou hast sense enough to prize the pearl,
And, as thou would'st th' advancement of thine heir
In all good faculties beneath his care,
Respect, as is but rational and just,
A man deem'd worthy of so dear a trust.
Despis'd by thee, what more can he expect
From youthful folly, than the same neglect?
A flat and fatal negative obtains,
That instant, upon all his future pains ;
His lessons tire, his mild rebukes offend,
And all the instructions of thy son's best friend
Are a stream choak'd, or trickling to no end.

} Doom

Doom him not then to solitary meals,
 But recollect that he has sense, and feels ;
 And that, possessor of a soul refin'd,
 An upright heart and cultivated mind,
 His post not mean, his talents not unknown,
 He deems it hard to vegetate alone.
 And if admitted at thy board he sit,
 Account him no just mark for idle wit ;
 Offend not him, whom modesty restrains
 From rapartee, with jokes that he disdains,
 Much less transfix his feelings with an oath,
 Nor frown, unless he vanish with the cloth.—
 And, trust me, his utility may reach
 To more than he is hir'd or bound to teach,
 Much trash unutter'd, and some ills undone,
 Through rev'rence of the censor of thy son.

But if thy table be indeed unclean,
 Foul with excess, and with discourse obscene,

And thou a wretch, whom, following her old plan,
The world accounts an honourable man,
Because forsooth thy courage has been tried
And stood the test, perhaps on the wrong side,
Though thou hadst never grace enough to prove
That any thing but vice could win thy love :—
Or hast thou a polite, card-playing wife,
Chain'd to the routs that she frequents, for life,
Who, just when industry begins to snore,
Flies, wing'd with joy, to some coach-crowded door,
And thrice in ev'ry winter throngs thine own
With half the chariots and sedans in town,
Thyself meanwhile e'en shifting as thou may'st,
Not very sober though, nor very chaste ;—
Or is thine house, though less superb thy rank,
If not a scene of pleasure, a mere blank,
And thou at best, and in thy sob'rest mood,
A trifler vain, and empty of all good ;—
Though mercy for thyself thou can'st have none,
Hear nature plead, show mercy to thy son,

Sav'd

Sav'd from his home, where ev'ry day brings forth
 Some mischief fatal to his future worth,
 Find him a better in a distant spot,
 Within some pious pastor's humble cot,
 Where vile example (your's I chiefly mean,
 The most seducing and the oft'nest seen)
 May never more be stamp'd upon his breast,
 Not yet perhaps inturably impress'd.
 Where early rest makes early rising sure,
 Disease or comes not, or finds easy cure,
 Prevented much by diet neat and plain,
 Or if it enter, soon starv'd out again :
 Where all th' attention of his faithful host,
 Discreetly limited to two at most,
 May raise such fruits as shall reward his care,
 And not at last evaporate in air :
 Where, stillness aiding study, and his mind
 Serene, and to his duties much inclin'd,
 Not occupied in day-dreams, as at home,
 Of pleasures past or follies yet to come,

His

See wealth abus'd, and dignities misplac'd,
 Great titles, offices, and trusts disgrac'd,
 Long lines of ancestry, renown'd of old,
 Their noble qualities all quench'd and cold;
 See Bedlam's closetted and hand-cuff'd charge
 Surpass'd in frenzy by the mad at large;
 See great commanders making war a trade,
 Great lawyers, lawyers without study made;
 Churchmen, in whose esteem their blest employ
 Is odious, and their wages all their joy,
 Who, far enough from furnishing their shelves
 With gospel lore, turn infidels themselves;
 See womanhood despis'd, and manhood sham'd
 With infamy too nauseous to be nam'd,
 Fops at all corners, lady-like in mien,
 Civeted fellows, smelt ere they are seen,
 Else coarse and rude in manners, and their tongue
 On fire with curses and with nonsense hung,
 Now flush'd with drunk'ness, now with whoredom palé,
 Their breath a sample of last night's regale;

See volunteers in all the vilest arts,
 Men well endow'd, of honourable parts,
 Design'd by nature wise, but self-made fools ;
 All these, and more like these, were bred at schools.
 And if it chance, as sometimes chance it will,
 That though school-bred, the boy be virtuous still;
 Such rare exceptions shining in the dark,
 Prove, rather than impeach, the just remark ;
 As here and there a twinkling star descried
 Serves but to show how black is all beside:
 Now look on him whose very voice in tone
 Just echoes thine, whose features are thine own;
 And stroke his polish'd cheek of purest red,
 And lay thine hand upon his flaxen head,
 And say, My boy, th' unwelcome hour is come;
 When thou, transplanted from thy genial home,
 Must find a colder soil and bleaker air,
 And trust for safety to a stranger's care;
 What character, what turn thou wilt assume
 From constant converse with I know not whom ;

Who there will court thy friendship, with what views,
And, artless as thou art, whom thou wilt chuse ;
Though much depends on what thy choice shall be,
Is all chance-medley, and unknown to me.
Can'st thou, the tear just trembling on thy lids,
And while the dreadful risque foreseen, forbids,
Free too, and under no constraining force,
Unless the sway of custom warp thy course,
Lay such a stake upon the losing side,
Merely to gratify so blind a guide ?
Thou can'st not ! Nature, pulling at thine heart,
Condemns th' unfatherly, th' imprudent part.
Thou would'st not, deaf to Nature's tend'rest plea,
Turn him adrift upon a rolling sea,
Nor say, *go thither*, conscious that there lay
A brood of asps, or quicksands in his way ;
Then, only govern'd by the self-same rule
Of nat'ral pity, send him not to school.
No—guard him better : Is he not thine own,
Thyself in miniature, thy flesh, thy bone ?

And

And hop'ft thou not ('tis ev'ry father's hope)
 That ſince thy ſtrength muſt with thy years elope,
 And thou wilt need ſome comfort, to affuage
 Health's laſt farewell, a ſtaff of thine old age,
 That then, in recompence of all thy cares,
 Thy child ſhall ſhow reſpect to thy grey hairs,
 Befriend thee, of all other friends bereft,
 And give thy life its only cordial left ?
 Aware then how much danger intervenes,
 To compaſs that good end, forecaſt the means.
 His heart, now paſſive, yields to thy command ;
 Secure it thine, its key is in thine hand.
 If thou deſert thy charge, and throw it wide,
 Nor heed what gueſts there enter and abide,
 Complain not if attachments lewd and baſe
 Supplant thee in it, and uſurp thy place.
 But if thou guard its ſacred chambers ſure
 From vicious inmates and delights impure,
 Either his gratitude ſhall hold him faſt,
 And keep him warm and filial to the laſt ;

Or if he prove unkind (as who can say
 But, being man, and therefore frail, he may ?)
 One comfort yet shall cheer thine aged heart,
 Howe'er he slight thee, thou hast done thy part.

Oh barb'rous ! would'st thou with a Gothic hand
 Pull down the schools—what !—all the schools i' th'land ;
 Or throw them up to liv'ry-nags and grooms,
 Or turn them into shops and auction rooms ?
 A captious question, sir (and your's is one)
 Deserves an answer similar, or none.
 Would'st thou, possessor of a flock, employ
 (Appriz'd that he is such) a careless boy,
 And feed him well, and give him handsome pay,
 Merely to sleep, and let them run astray ?
 Survey our schools and colleges, and see
 A sight not much unlike my simile.
 From education, as the leading cause,
 The public character its colour draws,

Thence the prevailing manners take their cast,
 Extravagant or sober, loose or chaste.
 And though I would not advertise them yet,
 Nor write on each—*This Building to be Let*,
 Unless the world were all prepar'd t' embrace
 A plan well worthy to supply their place,
 Yet, backward as they are, and long have been,
 To cultivate and keep the MORALS clean,
 (Forgive the crime) I wish them, I confess,
 Or better manag'd, or encourag'd less.



THE DIVERTING
H I S T O R Y

OF

J O H N G I L P I N,

SHEWING, HOW HE WENT FARTHER THAN HE
INTENDED AND CAME SAFE HOME AGAIN.

JOHN GILPIN was a citizen
Of credit and renown,
A train-band captain eke was he
Of famous London town.

John Gilpin's spouse said to her dear,
Though wedded we have been
These twice ten tedious years, yet we
No holiday have seen.

Z 4

Ta-morrow

To-morrow is our wedding-day,
And we will then repair
Unto the Bell at Edmonton
All in a chaise and pair.

My sister and my sister's child,
Myself and children three,
Will fill the chaise, so you must ride
On horseback after we.

He soon replied, I do admire
Of womankind but one,
And you are she, my dearest dear,
Therefore it shall be done.

I am a linen-draper bold,
As all the world doth know,
And my good friend the Callender
Will lend his horse to go.

Quoth

Quoth Mrs. Gilpin, That's well said ;
And for that wine is dear,
We will be furnish'd with our own,
Which is both bright and clear.

John Gilpin kifs'd his loving wife ;
O'erjoy'd was he to find
That, though on pleasure she was bent,
She had a frugal mind.

The morning came, the chaise was brought,
But yet was not allow'd
To drive up to the door, lest all
Should say that she was proud.

So three doors off the chaise was stay'd,
Where they did all get in,
Six precious souls, and all agog
To dash through thick and thin.

Smack

Smack went the whip, round went the wheels,
Were never folk so glad,
The stones did rattle underneath
As if Cheapside were mad.

John Gilpin at his horse's side
Seiz'd fast the flowing mane,
And up he got in haste to ride,
But soon came down again ;

For saddle-tree scarce reach'd had he,
His journey to begin,
When, turning round his head, he saw
Three customers come in.

So down he came ; for loss of time,
Although it griev'd him sore,
Yet loss of pence, full well he knew,
Would trouble him much more.

'Twas

'Twas long before the customers
Were suited to their mind,
When Betty screaming came down stairs,
“ The wine is left behind.”

Good lack ! quoth he—yet bring it me,
My leathern belt likewise,
In which I bear my trusty sword
When I do exercise.

Now Mistrefs Gilpin, careful soul !
Had two stone bottles found,
To hold the liquor that she lov'd,
And keep it safe and sound.

Each bottle had a curling ear,
Through which the belt he drew,
And hung a bottle on each side,
To make his balance true.

Then

Then over all, that he might be
Equipp'd from top to toe,
His long red cloak, well brush'd and neat,
He manfully did throw.

Now see him mounted once again
Upon his nimble steed,
Full slowly pacing o'er the stones
With caution and good heed.

But finding soon a smoother road
Beneath his well-shod feet,
The snorting beast began to trot,
Which gall'd him in his seat.

So, Fair and softly, John he cried,
But John he cried in vain,
That trot became a gallop soon,
In spite of curb and rein.

So

So stooping down, as needs he must
Who cannot sit upright,
He grasp'd the mane with both his hands,
And eke with all his might.

His horse, who never in that fort
Had handled been before,
What thing upon his back had got
Did wonder more and more.

Away went Gilpin neck or nought,
Away went hat and wig ;
He little dreamt, when he set out,
Of running such a rig.

The wind did blow, the cloak did fly,
Like streamer long and gay,
'Till loop and button failing both,
At last it flew away.

Then

Then might all people well discern
The bottles he had slung;
A bottle swinging at each side,
As hath been said or sung.

The dogs did bark, the children scream'd,
Up flew the windows all;
And ev'ry soul cried out, Well done!
As loud as he could bawl.

Away went Gilpin — who but he;
His fame soon spread around —
He carries weight! he rides a race!
'Tis for a thousand pound!

And still as fast as he drew near,
'Twas wonderful to view
How in a trice the turnpike-men
Their gates wide open threw.

And now as he went bowing down
His reeking head full low,
The bottles twain behind his back
Were shatter'd at a blow.

Down ran the wine into the road,
Most piteous to be seen,
Which made his horse's flanks to smoke
As they had basted been.

But still he seem'd to carry weight,
With leathern girdle brac'd;
For all might see the bottle-necks
Still dangling at his waist.

Thus all through merry Islington
These gambols he did play,
And till he came unto the Wash
Of Edmonton so gay.

And

And there he threw the wash about
On both sides of the way,
Just like unto a trundling mop,
Or a wild goose at play.

At Edmonton his loving wife
From the balcony spied
Her tender husband, wond'ring much
To see how he did ride.

Stop, stop, John Gilpin!—Here's the house—
They all at once did cry;
The dinner waits, and we are tir'd;
Said Gilpin—So am I.

But yet his horse was not a whit
Inclin'd to tarry there;
For why? his owner had a house
Full ten miles off, at Ware.

So like an arrow swift he flew,
Shot by an archer strong;
So did he fly—which brings me to
The middle of my song.

Away went Gilpin, out of breath,
And sore against his will,
Till at his friend the Callender's
His horse at last stood still.

The Callender, amaz'd to see
His neighbour in such trim,
Laid down his pipe, flew to the gate,
And thus accosted him:

What news! what news! your tidings tell,
Tell me you must and shall—
Say why bare-headed you are come,
Or why you come at all?

Now Gilpin had a pleasant wit,
And lov'd a timely joke ;
And thus unto the Callender
In merry guise he spoke :

I came because your horse would come ;
And, if I well forebode,
My hat and wig will soon be here,
They are upon the road.

The Callender, right glad to find
His friend in merry pin,
Return'd him not a single word,
But to the house went in ;

Whence strait he came with hat and wig,
A wig that flow'd behind,
A hat not much the worse for wear,
Each comely in its kind.

He

He held them up, and, in his turn,
Thus show'd his ready wit—
My head is twice as big as yours,
They therefore needs must fit.

But let me scrape the dirt away
That hangs upon your face ;
And stop and eat, for well you may
Be in a hungry case,

Said John, It is my wedding-day,
And all the world would stare,
If wife should dine at Edmonton
And I should dine at Ware.

So turning to his horse, he said,
I am in haste to dine ;
'Twas for your pleasure you came here,
You shall go back for mine.

A a 2

Ah

Ah luckless speech, and bootless boast !
For which he paid full dear ;
For while he spake, a braying ass
Did sing most loud and clear ;

Whereat his horse did snort as he
Had heard a lion roar,
And gallop'd off with all his might,
As he had done before.

Away went Gilpin, and away
Went Gilpin's hat and wig ;
He lost them sooner than at first,
For why ? they were too big.

Now, Mistress Gilpin, when she saw
Her husband posting down
Into the country far away,
She pull'd out half a crown ;

And thus unto the youth she said
That drove them to the Bell,
This shall be your's when you bring back
My husband safe and well.

The youth did ride, and soon did meet
John coming back amain,
Whom in a trice he tried to stop
By catching at his rein ;

But not performing what he meant,
And gladly would have done,
The frightened steed he frightened more,
And made him faster run.

Away went Gilpin, and away
Went post-boy at his heels,
The post-boy's horse right glad to miss
The lumb'ring of the wheels.

Six gentlemen upon the road
Thus seeing Gilpin fly,
With post-boy scamp'ring in the rear,
They rais'd the hue and cry :

Stop thief ! stop thief !—a highwayman !
Not one of them was mute ;
And all and each that pass'd that way
Did join in the pursuit,

And now the turnpike gates again
Flew open in short space,
The toll-men thinking, as before,
That Gilpin rode a race,

And so he did, and won it too,
For he got first to town,
Nor stopp'd till where he had got up
He did again get down,

Now let us sing, Long live the king,
And Gilpin, long live he ;
And when he next doth ride abroad,
May I be there to see !

F I N I S.